

# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

## **Monterey, California**



## **THESIS**

**CLAUSEWITZ AND THE THEORY OF MILITARY STRATEGY IN  
EUROPE – REFLECTIONS UPON A PARADIGM OF MILITARY  
STRATEGY WITHIN THE EUROPEAN COMMON SECURITY AND  
DEFENSE POLICY (ESDP)**

by

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June 2001

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## Form SF298 Citation Data

<b>Report Date</b> <i>("DD MON YYYY")</i> 15 Jun 2001	<b>Report Type</b> N/A	<b>Dates Covered (from... to)</b> <i>("DD MON YYYY")</i>
<b>Title and Subtitle</b> CLAUSEWITZ AND THE THEORY OF MILITARY STRATEGY IN EUROPE REFLECTIONS UPON A PARADIGM OF MILITARY STRATEGY WITHIN THE EUROPEAN COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLICY (ESDP)		<b>Contract or Grant Number</b>
		<b>Program Element Number</b>
<b>Authors</b>	<b>Project Number</b>	
	<b>Task Number</b>	
	<b>Work Unit Number</b>	
<b>Performing Organization Name(s) and Address(es)</b> Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5138	<b>Performing Organization Number(s)</b>	
<b>Sponsoring/Monitoring Agency Name(s) and Address(es)</b>	<b>Monitoring Agency Acronym</b>	
	<b>Monitoring Agency Report Number(s)</b>	
<b>Distribution/Availability Statement</b> Approved for public release, distribution unlimited		
<b>Supplementary Notes</b>		
<b>Abstract</b>		
<b>Subject Terms</b>		
<b>Document Classification</b> unclassified	<b>Classification of SF298</b> unclassified	
<b>Classification of Abstract</b> unclassified	<b>Limitation of Abstract</b> unlimited	
<b>Number of Pages</b> 157		

<b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.				
<b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)</b>		<b>2. REPORT DATE</b> June 2001	<b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b> Master's Thesis	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE:</b> Title (Mix case letters) Clausewitz and the Theory of Military Strategy in Europe – Reflections upon a Paradigm of Military Strategy within the European Common Security and Defense Policy (ESDP)			<b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR</b> Uwe Hartmann, LTC GE ARMY				
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A			<b>10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the German Ministry of Defense or the German Government.				
<b>12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.			<b>12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b>	
<p>The purpose of the study is to reveal characteristics of the strategic cultures in Britain, France, and Germany as the major member states of the European Union (EU). Assuming that national differences can be detected, the study proceeds in assessing whether there is an opportunity to reconcile them, or even to establish a European paradigm of strategic thinking as a core element of the Common Security and Defense Policy of the EU. Based on the interpretation of Clausewitz's theory of war and strategy in Britain, France, and Germany, main commonalities and diversities in strategic thinking are discussed. Analyzing, on the international and state level, why Clausewitz has been misunderstood, this study establishes Clausewitz's theory of war and strategy as the theoretical framework of strategy-making within the EU. The fruitfulness of the Clausewitzian paradigm is shown in two areas: first, Clausewitz's theoretical approach assists in gaining an improved understanding of the political and military strategic environment of the EU; second, it provides awareness of the challenges given with multinationality as strategic principle of the EU. Finally, Clausewitz's theory allows institutional and educational consequences to be drawn.</p>				
<b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b>  European Union, Common Security and Defense Policy, Clausewitz, strategy, strategic culture, Liddell Hart, Fuller, multinationality			<b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 144	
			<b>16. PRICE CODE</b>	
<b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b> Unclassified	<b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b> Unclassified	<b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b> Unclassified	<b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b> UL	

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REFLECTIONS UPON A PARADIGM OF MILITARY STRATEGY WITHIN  
THE EUROPEAN COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLICY (ESDP)**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of the study is to reveal characteristics of the strategic cultures in Britain, France, and Germany as the major member states of the European Union (EU). Assuming that national differences can be detected, the study proceeds in assessing whether there is an opportunity to reconcile them, or even to establish a European paradigm of strategic thinking as a core element of the Common Security and Defense Policy of the EU. Based on the interpretation of Clausewitz's theory of war and strategy in Britain, France, and Germany, main commonalities and diversities in strategic thinking are discussed. Analyzing, on the international and state level, why Clausewitz has been misunderstood, this study establishes Clausewitz's theory of war and strategy as the theoretical framework of strategy-making within the EU. The fruitfulness of the Clausewitzian paradigm is shown in two areas: first, Clausewitz's theoretical approach assists in gaining an improved understanding of the political and military strategic environment of the EU; second, it provides awareness of the challenges given with multinationality as a strategic principle of the EU. Finally, Clausewitz's theory allows institutional and educational consequences to be drawn.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>I.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>SCENARIO.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>APPROACH.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>THEORETICAL BACKGROUND.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>CLAUSEWITZ' S THEORY OF WAR.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>BIOGRAPHICAL REMARKS.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>OUTLINE OF CLAUSEWITZ'S THEORETICAL WORKS .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Philosophy and Experience .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Major Propositions.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>III.</b>	<b>CLAUSEWITZ' S IMPACT AND INTERPRETATION IN EUROPE.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>COMMONALITY.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>The Course of the Interpretation .....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>The Neglect of Philosophy of Science .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>The Desire for Simplicity.....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>The Cult of the Offensive.....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>DIVERSITY .....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Primacy of Policy.....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Alternative Strategic Concepts .....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>ANALYSIS.....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>International Level.....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>State Level.....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>D.</b>	<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b>CLAUSEWITZ AND THE MILITARY STRATEGY OF THE EU .....</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>THE POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT.....</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Britian's and France's Strategic Initiative.....</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Reasons of the Paradigmatic Shift.....</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>MULTINATIONALITY .....</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>The Dark Side: Crises.....</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Lesson Learned from Nato Crises .....</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>134</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b>FINAL REMARKS.....</b>	<b>139</b>
	<b>INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST .....</b>	<b>143</b>



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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The author would like to thank the professors of the NSA department, in particular Prof. Dr. Donald Abenheim, Prof. Dr. Daniel Moran, Prof. Dr. Douglas Porch, Prof. Dr. Jeff Knopf, and Colonel Tjack Roessler, for helping me to gain a significantly improved understanding of European history and politics.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study reveals characteristics of the strategic cultures in Britain, France, and Germany as the major member states of the European Union (EU). Assuming that national differences can be detected, the study proceeds in assessing whether there is an opportunity to reconcile them, or even to establish a European paradigm of strategic thinking as a core element of the Common Security and Defense Policy of the EU. Based on the interpretation of Clausewitz's theory of war and strategy in Britain, France, and Germany, main commonalities and diversities in strategic thinking are discussed.

The main conclusion is that Clausewitz's theory of war and strategy has the potential to establish the desirable European strategic paradigm. The superiority of Clausewitz's theory results from its comprehensiveness that is founded on exceptional personal experience and mind, broad historical evidence, and deep theoretical reflections that includes philosophy of science. By this, Clausewitz might help to prevent the military from establishing autonomous or elite strategic concepts that are justified by "timeless" military principles; instead, he makes war and strategy subject to the rational discourse of all social players involved, thus covering all dimensions of strategy-making.

To take advantage of the fruitfulness of Clausewitz's scientific approach and his propositions on war and strategy, politicians, officials, and commanders must understand his theoretical writings. Strategy-makers are encouraged to critically reflect upon their own strategic thinking by confronting it with Clausewitz's *entire* theory of war and strategy. To practice this critical method, two prerequisites are necessary: first, the proper education of strategists that includes the ability to critically reflect upon one's own

strategic mind, and cooperation in the strategy-making process that includes scholars with expertise in the theory and history of strategy-making.

With the European integration process, most reasons for differences between the British and the continental way of warfare and strategy have been abolished. Certainly, Britain has conducted the most radical shift in strategy-making. However, the traditional British approach of indirectness finds a strong European expression in the broad security concept of the EU that comprises a wide spectrum of civilian means and coordinates them closely with the conduct of military operations at the strategic level. Furthermore, the EU benefits from the strong British political culture of political supremacy and inter-agency cooperation in strategy-making. Undoubtedly, the British approach is in line with the conclusions Clausewitz draws in his theoretical writings. Paradoxically, if the additional British tradition of trashing Clausewitz can be overcome, Britain has the capacity to prevent its EU partners from continuing to understand Clausewitz in the one-dimensional continental way that traditionally focuses more at the operational and tactical level of warfare.

Strategically, the EU is both, a continental and a naval power. Tactically, the European Rapid Reaction Forces (ERRF) are designed as a corps-sized military formation enabled to conduct joint operations. However, because of the limited number of forces assigned to the EU, the capabilities for power projection are rather limited. Even if the EU military force strength is likely to be increased in the future, its military operations will depend on NATO for the foreseeable future. This is not so much because of the lack of planning capabilities or the technology gap but rather because of the necessity to be prepared for escalation scenarios. Consequently, EU strategy-makers need

to establish strong institutional and personal links to NATO, thereby facing the dilemma of a successful EU undermining the relevance of NATO in the field of crisis management operations.

Implementing the EU strategy-making as an inter-governmental and not supra-governmental process, EU strategy-makers encounter enormous complexity. Like NATO, the EU will, most probably, face crises. The successful management of internal crises depends primarily on the leadership behavior of Britain and France; on the ability of the commander of the ERRF to create trust among the force contributing countries; and on the European identity of the people of the European states, including the soldiers. Nevertheless, the strong dependence on national policies and politics as well as the inexperienced co-leadership of Britain and France put a burden on the capability of the EU to implement its pro-active power projection strategy.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

One major subject of the ongoing European unification process is the harmonization of classical strategic thought of the European nation states. In the end, different national traditions in strategic thinking, if not reflected upon and, as far as possible, reconciled, might create obstacles for the efforts of the European Union in establishing and implementing European military strategies. Consequently, before officials and officers from the EU's troop-contributing nations to the European military forces start to cooperate in developing strategic concepts, it is reasonable to reflect upon the strategic understanding they carry with them.

### A. SCENARIO

With a widely unexpected pace, the European Union (EU) has integrated Western and Central Europe since its first institution, the European Community for Steel and Coal (ECSC), was founded in 1950.<sup>1</sup> After having dealt with purely economic questions for more than 30 years, the EU widened its areas of cooperation to those fields of policies that are supposed to be at the core of the nation state's sovereignty, in particular the foreign policy. Apparently, authority to implement foreign policies has not been extended to supranational institutions; and up to now, the intention of creating an European Army

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<sup>1</sup> Information about the history of the EU provide Oudenaren, John van, "A History of Three Treaties", in Ronald Tiersky (ed.), *Europe Today*, Lanham/Boulder/New York/Oxford, 1999, pp. 241-272; McCormick, John, *Understanding the European Union*, Palgrave, 1999, pp. 57-86. The envisioned enlargement of the EU to Central Eastern Europe and Eastern Europe is discussed in Sedelmeier, Ulrich, Wallace, Helen, "Eastern Enlargement", in Helen Wallace and William Wallace (ed.), *Policy-Making in the European Union*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2000, pp. 427-460.



has been denied by all nations involved.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, with the concepts of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common European Security and Defense Policy (CESDP)<sup>3</sup>, the EU agreed on the intergovernmental harmonization of all member states' foreign, security and defense policies. Since 1997, Henry Kissinger's famous, and rather cynical, question, "When I want to speak to Europe, whom do I call"? has found a first answer with the implementation of the High Representative for a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).<sup>4</sup> In addition, the characterization of the EU as "... an economic giant, a political dwarf, and a military worm"<sup>5</sup> has been erased by the establishment of the European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF) that is scheduled to be operational ready in the year 2003.<sup>6</sup> Today, the EU appears to be firmly committed to the project of the CESDP, even in such a way that it is willing to risk major disputes against the US for its relationship with NATO.

Therefore, imagine the following scenario: until 2003, the EU establishes the military forces capable for 'autonomous action'<sup>7</sup> and the required political-military

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<sup>2</sup> However, the degree of denial differs among the European states involved. Very strong is the British denial (Oates, Mark, *European Defense: From Pörttschach to Helsinki*, International Affairs and Defense Section, House of Commons, Research Paper 00/20, 21.02.2000, p. 35).

<sup>3</sup> The CFSP was established as the second pillar of the EU under the Treaty of Maastricht. This treaty defined the objective of the union in external policy as "assert its identity on the international scene, in particular, through the implementation of a common foreign and security policy, including the eventual framing of a common defense policy, which might in time lead to a common defense" (TEU, Article B). For discussion see Forster, Anthony, Wallace, William, "Common Foreign and Security policy. From Shadow to Substance?", in Helen Wallace and William Wallace (ed.), *Policy-Making in the European Union*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2000, pp. 461-491.

<sup>4</sup> Treaty of Amsterdam, 2 October 1997, Article 18, p. 119. Mr. Javier Solana, appointed as 'Mr CFSP' in 1999, additionally later became the Secretary-General of the WEU (Oakes, *European Defense: From Pörttschach to Helsinki*, pp. 25-27).

<sup>5</sup> McCormick, *Understanding the European Union*, p. 206.

<sup>6</sup> The French President Chirac and the British Prime Minister Blair at the Anglo-French Summit at St. Malo laid the roots for the establishment of the ERRF in November 1998. After several EU meetings, the ERRF were announced at the Helsinki European Council summit in December 1999. For more information see chapter IV.

<sup>7</sup> Joint Declaration issued at the British-French Summit, Saint-Malo, France, 3-4 December 1998,

decision-making structure, including the capability for military strategic planning.<sup>8</sup> In order to prevent unnecessary duplication of command structures, the EU absorbs the Western European Union (WEU) and agrees with NATO on cooperation in crises management operations. Although NATO has agreed to provide the military planning capabilities on the strategic and operational level<sup>9</sup>, the EU, pursuing a broad approach in crisis management, builds up its own institutions for strategic decision-making integrating political, military, civilian security, economic and ecological means and establishing close cooperation with International Organizations (IO) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO).<sup>10</sup> Operating with close support from NATO headquarters, EU military strategic decision-making institutions provide the required advice to the heads of states and the national representatives within the structure of the European Council. However, due to the internal dynamic of the European integration process<sup>11</sup>, the EU proceeds to increase planning capacities that – under the principles of cooperation and transparency with NATO – would enable it to conduct military operations without relying on NATO headquarters.

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available (online): <http://www.fco.gov.uk/news/newstext.asp?1795>, p. 1 (02.02.01). Action comprises military operations that are, as defined in the Petersberg Declaration in 1992 and confirmed in the Kirchbach Declaration in 1995, limited to humanitarian intervention, crisis management, peacekeeping, including peacemaking if required.

<sup>8</sup> Annex III of the Presidency Conclusions, Cologne European Council 3-4 June 1999 in Oates, *European Defense: From Pörschach to Helsinki*, p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> The agreement reached in Washington in 1999 is as follows: “We therefore stand ready to define and adopt the necessary arrangements for ready access by the European Union to the collective assets and capabilities of the Alliance, for operations in which the Alliance as a whole is not engaged militarily as an Alliance” (NATO Summit Communiqué of 24 April 1999, item 10, available (online): <http://www.nato.int>) (February 2001).

<sup>10</sup> Presidency Conclusions, Helsinki, European Council 10 and 11 December 1999 in Oates, *European Defense: From Pörschach to Helsinki*, p. 32.

<sup>11</sup> Theories of integration with regard to the EU are discussed in McCormick, *Understanding the European Union*, Palgrave, 1999, pp. 9-20; Robert, Cottrell, “Europe: So Far, It Flies”, in *The New York Review*, 8 April 1999, p. 72. According to Cottrell, the “dis-equilibrium dynamics” of European

With this scenario becoming reality in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the question arises, what challenges civilian and military personnel working in EU institutions responsible for strategic planning have to face when developing a general military strategy for the EU and specific military strategies for single crisis scenarios. Generally, the most favorable condition is if the personnel involved in strategic planning share the same assumptions and propositions about strategy. At the a look, a broad consensus about military strategy seems to exist among officials and officers from those EU member states that are simultaneously members of NATO. Seen through the screen of the constructivist theory of international relations<sup>12</sup>, NATO has had a socializing impact on its member states, not only with regard to their democratic culture and values but also with regard to military strategic thinking and planning.<sup>13</sup> The socializing function of NATO is, in particular, caused by the consensus principle of decision-making within NATO. Consequently, representatives of all member states have had the opportunity to participate proactively in political and military strategic planning and decision-making. Therefore, communicating and cooperating within NATO could even have possessed the quality of ‘arguing’<sup>14</sup> that educates participants in discovering the

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integration encourages the nations to initiate the next step once a project is finished. Others call this the bicycle theory of integration: ‘move forward, or fall over’.

<sup>12</sup> Finnemore, Martha, *National Interests in International Society*, Ithaca/London, 1996.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas points out the paradigmatic shift of strategy-making in Europe: “The notion that European states would forgo attempts to maintain or create a complete military establishment was a radical departure from past practice. This period (early 50s; U.H.) marks the emergence of NATO as a transnational institution, and is an early indication of the alliance’s remarkable ability to forge consensus, overturn long-standing tradition, and identify and nurture common interests” (Thomas, Ian Q.R., *The Promise of Alliance. NATO and the political Imagination*, Lanham/Boulder/New York/Oxford: Rowman&Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1997, p. 30). During the Gulf War in 1991, wherever possible, NATO procedures were used. That helped the ad hoc alliance to fight as a coherent unit (p. 159).

<sup>14</sup> Risse, Thomas, “‘Let’s argue!’: Communicative Action in World Politics.” In: *International Organization* 54, 1, Winter 2000, pp. 7-39.

truth rather than to pursue pure national interests.<sup>15</sup> In general, the EU can take advantage of the experience its personnel gained through active participation in the strategic decision-making processes of NATO.

However, several arguments exist that might question the assumed consensus on assumptions and propositions about strategy. First, the developments of the alliance's strategies<sup>16</sup> have been dominated by the US. Providing the highest amount of resources to implement the different strategic concepts of NATO, in particular with regard to the nuclear deterrence<sup>17</sup>, the US continuously maintains its dominance over the strategic discussions and decisions until today.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, "the Europeans became used to coordinating their defense policies within the NATO framework, guided by US leadership"<sup>19</sup>. With regard to the EU's security and defense institutions, however, a hegemon that guides the direction of discussions and covers disputes is not likely to emerge.

Secondly, national strategies always had been decisive means of the European nation states to gain superiority in the European political and military antagonism, in

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<sup>15</sup> De Wyck, for example, describes the brainstorming sessions of NATO that aimed to develop a new strategic concept in the early 90s. De Wyck, Rob, *NATO on the Brink of the new Millenium*, London: Brassey's (UK) Ltd, 1997, pp. 20-47.

<sup>16</sup> Pedlow, Gregory W., *The Evolution of NATO Strategy 1949 – 1969*, Brussels, 1997.

<sup>17</sup> Consequently, during the Cold War, the strategic discussion was mainly focused on the nuclear strategy. As Reid argues, many leading commentators in the realm of strategy were civilian academics that were not interested in military doctrine. This lead to a separation of strategic studies from the conduct of war in a classical that is conventional sense. In the end, there are really no military intellectuals dealing with strategy that could cooperate with the civilian academics. See Reid, Brian Holden, *Studies in British Military Thought*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998, pp. XI, 12, and 93. This again supports the purpose of this study.

<sup>18</sup> Jordan, Robert, *Norstad: Cold War NATO Supreme Commander*, London/New York, 2000; Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>19</sup> McCormick, *Understanding the European Union*, p. 210.

particular in the Franco-German rivalry.<sup>20</sup> Although a Europe-wide discussion on strategic issues has been established since the 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>21</sup>, strategy was a matter of utmost *national* security. Consequently, a strong tradition of strategy-making ruled in the European states prohibiting them from establishing *combined* strategic planning and strategy-making. For example, France and Britain, although facing Germany as a common military threat, were, neither in 1914 nor in 1939/40, willing to build up common strategic planning elements.<sup>22</sup>

Third, experience in defining national strategies of the major EU member states has been quite different. One example is the nuclear strategy. While Germany has not possessed nuclear weapons under national control<sup>23</sup>, France and Great Britain built up and maintained substantial nuclear forces.<sup>24</sup> However, while Britain decided to cooperate closely with the US (and that means with NATO, too) in all affairs concerning nuclear strategy<sup>25</sup>, France used its nuclear force as a symbol of national independence, specifically from any US influence.<sup>26</sup>

Another example of different experiences among the European nations is their participation in warfare between the end of World War II and the end of the Cold War.

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<sup>20</sup> Reid, *Studies in British Military Thought*, p. 99.

<sup>21</sup> At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, for example, theoretical writings of Frederick the Great were translated into English (Luvaas, Jay, "Preface", in *Frederick the Great on the Art of War*, ed. and trans. by Jay Luvaas, New York: Da Capo Press, 1999, pp. VII-VIII.

<sup>22</sup> Instead, Britain decided to cooperate closely with the US in strategy-making. This cooperation already started in World War I, and was improved in World War II. More details in Parker, R.A.C.: *The Second World War*, Oxford/New York, 1990, pp. 115-130. Also the German-Italian-Japanese alliance suffered from poor strategic coordination.

<sup>23</sup> Jordan, *Norstad*, p. 109.

<sup>24</sup> Unterseher, Lutz, *Europe's Armed Forces at the Millenium: A Case Study of Change in France, the United Kingdom, and Germany*, 46 p., available (online): <http://www.comw.org/pda/9911eur.html> (March 2001).

<sup>25</sup> Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance*, p. 75.

<sup>26</sup> Jordan, *Norstad*, pp. 118-132.

Germany, the major land force on the continent, was not involved in any warfare operations at all. Having assigned all major military formations to NATO, Germany did not even establish strategic or operational planning capabilities. By contrast, France and Britain fought wars independent from NATO, for example the Suez-Campaign in 1956 or the Falkland-War in 1982. Furthermore, both countries were heavily engaged in the process of de-colonization in the 50s and 60s.<sup>27</sup> Evidently, France and Britain have maintained powerful institutions containing rich experience in national military strategy-making; these institutions have established strong traditions with significant intellectual impacts, in particular on the education of future strategists.

To conclude, although different experiences of European states might be favorable for military strategic planning and decision-making within the EU, evidence is significant suggesting that the strategic cultures<sup>28</sup> of the most powerful EU member states have, in spite of the common NATO experience, developed quite differently. Consequently, it seems to be a sound endeavor to investigate the national differences in strategic thinking, and to proof whether it is possible to establish a European strategic community operating with a common ‘strategic paradigm’<sup>29</sup>. Fundamentally, if the main national differences in strategic theory are not known and cannot be overcome, understanding and consensus-building within the EU’s strategic planning and decision-making institutions might be rendered more difficult.

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<sup>27</sup> Kaylor, William R., *The Twentieth-Century World*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 298-299, and 410-427; Carver, Michael, “Conventional Warfare in the Nuclear Age”, in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986, pp. 779-814.

<sup>28</sup> Following Gray, strategic culture “... consists of the socially constructed and transmitted assumptions, habits of mind, traditions, and preferred methods of operation – that is, behavior – that are more or less specific to a particular geographically based security community” (Gray, Colin S., *Modern Strategy*, Oxford: University Press, 1999, p. 28). The categories of strategic culture are described on pp. 148-150.

Difficulties in mutual understanding and consensual agreements will definitely increase if the first detectable trends of re-nationalization continue. The end of the Cold War forced all European nation states to put more emphasis on the operational and strategic level of warfare. Obviously, this was done by referring to those theorists and practitioners whom the national military history offers. At the German Armed Command and General Staff Academy, education of future general staff officers in strategy focused mainly on Clausewitz and Moltke. The first 'Führerreise' of the Army Chief of Staff of the Bundeswehr, conducted in 1999, aimed to educate generals and general staff officers in the art of operational warfare as taught by Clausewitz. In Britain, by contrast, Fuller and Liddell Hart were announced as the heroes for British officers<sup>30</sup>. Being aware of the power of tradition and the impact of rhetoric on strategic thinking, the nation states' reference to a specific, national strategist to guide the current reform of the national military system appears to be counterproductive to the challenge of elaborating a common strategy for the European military forces.

In the end, national traditions in strategic thinking, if not reflected upon and, as far as possible, reconciled, might create obstacles for the EU's efforts in establishing and implementing European military strategies. Consequently, before officials and officers from the EU's troop-contributing nations to the European military forces start to

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<sup>29</sup> Kuhn, Thomas S., *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago 1967.

<sup>30</sup> Moore-Bick, John, "Die britische Sichtweise", in Schössler, Dietmar (ed.), *Die Entwicklung des Strategie- und Operationsbegriffes seit Clausewitz*. Militärisch-wissenschaftliches Colloquium der Clausewitz-Gesellschaft e.V. am 06. und 07. April 1995 in Dresden, Universität der Bundeswehr München, München, 1997, pp. 65-72. See also Reid, *Studies in British Military Thought*, p. 231: "The British army today seems to have embraced Fuller's thinking with a certain degree of gusto that occasionally leaves me feeling uncomfortable."

cooperate in developing strategic concepts, it is reasonable to reflect upon the strategic understanding they carry with them.

## **B. APPROACH**

Out of the fundamental assumption of the philosophical hermeneutics that, even in revolutionary times, there survives a good deal of old thinking<sup>31</sup>, this study asks whether different traditions of strategic thinking in Europe have existed. Assuming that national differences can be detected, the study proceeds in assessing whether there is an opportunity to reconcile them<sup>32</sup>, or even to establish a European paradigm of strategic thinking. Many different ways can investigate the differences of strategic traditions in the European states. One useful way is to analyze the current strategic concepts of France, Britain and other EU countries that have an explicit strategy<sup>33</sup>. Another way is the empirical research of the “strategic mind” of those civilian and military personnel assigned to work in the strategic departments of the EU military headquarters, asking for the strategic assumptions and propositions they believe in or are convinced of. A third sensible approach is the analysis of the different curricula of the national universities and military educational institutions.

This study does not attempt to analyze the strategic thinking within the European nations empirically. There is neither an investigation of the thinking tools British, French

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<sup>31</sup> Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Truth and Method*, (deutsch: *Wahrheit und Methode*, Tübingen 1980).

<sup>32</sup> As the German general Hans-Henning von Sandart assumed in his article “Neue Herausforderungen an das strategische und operative Denken! – Ist Clausewitz noch zeitgemäß?”, in Schössler, Dietmar (ed.), *Die Entwicklung des Strategie- und Operationsbegriffes seit Clausewitz*, p. 78).

<sup>33</sup> See Unterseher, *Europe's Armed Forces at the Millenium*, pp. 14-24.



or German officers have been using nor an analysis of historic or current strategic concepts of Britain, France or Germany. By contrast, this study will reconstruct some main historical *ideas about strategy* that were created within these different countries. This approach is based on the assumption that ideas of outstanding theorists on strategy surely influenced the thoughts and deeds of people involved in strategy-making, sometimes without even being aware of this influence.<sup>34</sup> Essentially, this study assumes that ideas are important and influential on strategic behavior.<sup>35</sup>

Nevertheless, the focus of this study must be narrowed again. Not all theorists that might have influenced the discussions on military strategy in Europe can be covered here. A selection must be made. First of all, only those theorists widely regarded as “classical” should be treated here. Thus, theorists like Carl von Clausewitz, Antoine H. de Jomini, Helmuth von Moltke, J.F.C. Fuller, and Basil H. Liddell Hart remain as the main focus of this study. Secondly, among these, Clausewitz seems to possess the dominant position. This does not imply that most of the other European strategists agree with Clausewitz’s theory of war in general or his strategic considerations, in particular.<sup>36</sup> However, even more than 150 years after the first publication of *On War*, Clausewitz’s theory anchors in the core of the current strategic discussion.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, the strategic theorists selected in

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<sup>34</sup> Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, p. XVII, 261; Reid, *Studies in British Military Thought*, pp. 231-232.

<sup>35</sup> See Gray who points out the interrelationship between strategic ideas and strategic behavior (Gray, *Modern Strategy*, pp. 4, 35-36: “But no matter how firmly sets of strategic ideas are anchored in the realities of yesterday’s strategic history or in anticipated strategic realities, there is always a strategic theoretical dimension to the making, execution, and doing of strategy” (p. 36).

<sup>36</sup> Ironically, in the US an American national security community exists which is significantly shaped by Clausewitz’s theories. More information in Bassford, Christopher, *Clausewitz and his works*, p. 27; available (online): <http://www.clausewitz.com/CWZHOME/CWZSUMM/CWORKHOL.htm> (08.01.01).

<sup>37</sup> See Howard, Michael, “The Influence of Clausewitz”, in Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 27-44; Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*; the latest publication is Gray, *Modern Strategy*, 1999. Gray writes on p. XI: “Whether I have been studying nuclear targeting, the leverage of seapower, or the strategic

this study are analyzed by using Clausewitz's theory of war as an analytical screen to look through.<sup>38</sup>

The purpose of this study is to identify those issues of strategic theory, in which the European nations have established different traditions, and their implications for the EU. Different strategic theories might have been influenced by political, geopolitical, historical, economic, social, and even cultural differences among the European states that, if not reflected, could cause misperceptions in the interpretation of foreign strategic theorists. Again, Clausewitz, who, at the same time, was characterized as the “Mahdi of the masses” (Liddell Hart) *or* the proponent of limited war, appears to be an excellent point of reference for the test of this proposition. Thus, through the detection of national differences and intellectual misperceptions, this study aims to reconcile different approaches to the theory of strategy of European states. As a result, reconciling strategic theories to the greatest extent possible might help politicians, officials and officers to establish an improved communication and cooperation in developing common European military strategies.

This study is not intended to develop the future EU Strategic Concept. However, it might provide useful insights in those strategic issues in the realm of thought and theory that are in the core of the EU's strategic concepts. Here, the European process of military integration and the multinationality of military formations and operations are

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utility of special operations, Clausewitz's *On War* has been my constant companion and by far the most heavily used book in my library.” He argues that Clausewitz should retain the title of “First Theorist of War” (p. 12). This argument is widely discussed on pp. 79-112.

<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, this study excludes the dimension of nuclear war and strategy including the argument that “... nuclear war is no longer a continuation of policy by other means” (Aron, Raymond, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, 1985, p. 317; see also pp. 318-345). With Britain and France, the EU may someday possess nuclear weapons on a strategic and sub-strategic level. Its strategic implication must be covered in an additional study.

selected as central issues of European strategy-making that need to be analyzed in more detail by using the Clausewitzian theoretical approach.

In general, chapter II pursues the purpose of portraying Clausewitz's theory of war. Chapter III reveals the interpretation of Clausewitz's theoretical writings in Britain, France, and Germany, and shows how Clausewitz might help to overcome the diversity in the European strategic traditions and cultures, thereby being aware that Clausewitz himself has been subject to controversial disputes. This includes detecting commonalities and continuities in national strategic thinking, and evaluating to what extent diversity and national traditions can be maintained without disturbing the common European effort. Chapter IV aims to exemplify how Clausewitz's theory of war and strategy could help us to gain an improved understanding of current strategic developments in Europe.

The main proposition of this study is that a common strategic tradition or culture, although limited, can be reconstructed from European history. The elaboration of future common European military strategies should be based on the theoretical framework Clausewitz's theory of war provides. The sometimes-devastating critiques of Clausewitz have quite often been the result of misperceptions caused by (geo-) political, cultural, and even ideological, prejudices. Finally, Clausewitz's theory of strategy is the most comprehensive theory that deals, in particular, with the most challenging strategic problem: how the "... ever-growing complexity of modern war..."<sup>39</sup> can be best met?

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<sup>39</sup> Gray, *Modern Strategy*, p. 1. See also pp. 5, 357.

## C. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theoretical background of this study on Clausewitz and European strategic cultures is derived from the discussions within the realm of international relations. In general, this study looks at strategic theory and its future implementation in the European Defense and Security Policy (ESDP) context through the screen of the neo-liberal approach, reinforced with some constructivist elements. This is followed mainly because the neo-liberal theory possesses, compared with its neo-realist competitor, a broader screen to look at the strategic developments in Europe.

Clausewitz, by contrast, is definitely a representative of the realist approach. He puts main emphasis on the state, on balance-of-power policies, and on the dominance of military power.<sup>40</sup> Politically, Clausewitz is “... a theoretician of some sort of European equilibrium”.<sup>41</sup> On this level he realized that, as Aron argues,

The tendency towards equilibrium is not enough to prevent the temporary superiority of one state over all the others; that state ends up by perishing by fault of its very success, since it ranges against itself the majority of the other members of the European republic.<sup>42</sup>

The core theoretical assumption in the neo-realist theory is that

Balance-of-power politics prevail wherever two, and only two, requirements are met: that the order be anarchic and that it be populated by units wishing to survive.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 374; Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*; Paret, Peter, Moran, Daniel, “Part Two: Introduction”, in Clausewitz, Carl von: *Historical and political writings*, Princeton University Press 1992, pp. 9, 12, 229-230. Paret and Moran point out the influence of Machiavelli on Clausewitz’s historical and political thinking. Apparently, Clausewitz based his deliberations not on the idea of “perpetual peace” and the League of Nations, as envisioned by Kant (Kant, Immanuel, *Perpetual peace and other essays*, Cambridge/Indianapolis, p. 115).

<sup>41</sup> Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, p. 102.

<sup>42</sup> Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, p. 103.

<sup>43</sup> Waltz, Kenneth, *Theory of international Politics*, New York, 1979, p. 121.

Herewith, Kenneth Waltz, the main protagonist of the neo-realist theory of international relations, argues that there is a lawful relationship between the form of the order (international system) and the political behavior of politicians. As long as this assumption is fulfilled, a specific international order (anarchy) causes – in all times and at all places – a specific political behavior (balance-of-power policies). Balance-of-power policy does not necessarily force states to maximize power. Due to the insight in the ‘security dilemma’<sup>44</sup>, states may limit themselves in increasing power in order to prevent other states from feeling threatened and stimulating them to increase power too, thus making the security situation of all states worse. Therefore, “the first concern of states is not to maximize power but to maintain their positions in the system”<sup>45</sup>.

What are the implications of the neo-realist theory for strategy? Nations that follow this approach are likely to focus strategy on the promotion of their own interests in terms of political, economic and, in particular, military power. The state is the main actor that determines politics. Cooperation with other states does not have its own purpose but serves only to maintain the state’s position in the international system. Assuming politics is a zero-sum-game forcing nations to struggle for survival, neo-realists are more pessimistic on the outcome of multinational cooperation. Consequently, nations are more likely to defect from cooperation or to define small win-sets<sup>46</sup>, thus making cooperative agreements unlikely. In fact, states might be forced to defect from cooperation even if it is beneficial for them. This happens when cooperation is perceived as to providing

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<sup>44</sup> Waltz, *Theory of international Politics*, pp. 64, 186-7.

<sup>45</sup> Waltz, *Theory of international Politics*, p. 126.

<sup>46</sup> Putnam, Robert D., “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics”, in *Double-Edged Diplomacy*, ed. by Peter B. Evans, Harold K. Jacobson, Robert D. Putnam, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 1993, p. 439.

competitor nations with stronger 'relative gains'<sup>47</sup>. Fixed to this power positioning, ethical and moral considerations are not supposed to have any influence on the political decision-making processes. To sum up, strategy seen through the screen of the neo-realist theory is deduced from historical continuities and the realism of pessimism.<sup>48</sup>

Neo-liberal theorists agree on the core neo-realist assumption that the international system is anarchical. However, since the end of World War II, at least since the 70's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, interdependence has become a further characteristic of the international system. Neo-liberal theorists essentially argue that interdependence enables states to affect each other; that, next to the nation states, trans-national and trans-governmental organizations are involved in world politics; and that military issues have lost their priority in those political issues that are determined by high interdependence.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, states have an interest in international regimes, international institutions and cooperation. Using game theory<sup>50</sup>, neo-liberal theorists point out that politics is a non-zero-sum game, providing advantages for all nations engaged in international cooperation. Therefore, from the neo-liberal point of view, stable cooperation is possible. To sum up, strategy seen through the screen of the neo-liberal theory of international relations emphasizes cooperation among states and between states and trans-national actors; and it is aware of ethics and morale in international relations and, in general, of the complexity of political interaction.

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<sup>47</sup> Grieco, Joseph M., "Anarchy and the limits of cooperation: a realist critique of the newest liberal Institutionalism", *International Organization* 42, 3, Summer 1988, p. 505.

<sup>48</sup> Gray's *Modern Strategy* is an example of the realist approach in strategic theory (Gray, *Modern Strategy*, pp. 10-11).

<sup>49</sup> Keohane, Robert, Nye, Joseph, *Power and Interdependence*, Longman 2001.

<sup>50</sup> Axelrod, Robert, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, Basic Books, 1984.

The constructivist approach basically argues that states have problems to define national interests. “Interests are not just ‘out there’ waiting to be discovered; they are constructed through social interaction”<sup>51</sup>. Due to the strong interdependence within a dense network of transnational and international social relations, states are “... socialized to want certain things by the international society in which they and the people in them live”<sup>52</sup>. Therefore, national interests can change, for example through teaching and learning. Thus, states might even become motivated to follow the logic of appropriateness. Instead of focusing on the political, economic or military consequences of their decisions, states act in a specific way in order to meet moral obligations. Thomas Risse even argues that foreign policies of states could at times be understood as implementation of objectives that had been created by arguing, in a kind of ‘ideal speech situation’ that is not constrained by any win-sets the participants are obliged to obey. Then,

Interests and identities are no longer fixed, but subject to interrogation and challenges and, thus, to change. The goal of the discursive interaction is to achieve argumentative consensus with the other, not to push through one’s own view of the world or moral values. Since the validity claims of identities and interests are at stake in theoretical and practical discourses, an argumentative consensus has constitutive effects on actors<sup>53</sup>.

Consequently, even small states are able to influence the foreign policy of greater states if the latter are open to the arguments of the former. From this point of view, strategy is definitely no means to increase the power of the state or to pursue pure national interests.

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<sup>51</sup> Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society*, p. 2.

<sup>52</sup> Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society*, p. 2.

<sup>53</sup> Risse, Thomas: “Let’s argue!: Communicative Action in World Politics”, in: *International Organization* 54, 1, Winter 2000, p. 10.

To sum up, depending on the varied theoretical approaches, nation states might use strategy in general and military strategy in particular for different purposes: as a pursuit of national interests; as cooperation with benefits for all participants; as implementation of ethics and moral obligations; as socialization in form of teaching and learning; as discourse to define common policies without any regard to national interests. Preferences for specific theories of international relations are likely to influence military strategic thinking. With regard to the EU, these preferences might cause friction in the elaboration and implementation of military strategy.



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## II. CLAUSEWITZ'S THEORY OF WAR

### A. BIOGRAPHICAL REMARKS

Clausewitz's life has been described in detail several times elsewhere.<sup>54</sup> In this chapter, the short biographical remarks show that Clausewitz, although a theoretical mind and without major practical political and military influence in actual policy between 1816 and 1830, possessed outstanding experience in the field of warfare on tactical and strategic levels. Thus, the widespread assumption is falsified that Clausewitz was too strong of a theoretical head to be useful for military practice, and a highly educated officer, who, nevertheless, remained only a writer on war or even a "military dilettante"<sup>55</sup>. Ironically, Clausewitz regarded theoretical and philosophical considerations as necessary to understand war because of his rich experiences in war and peace.

*Clausewitz was well experienced in warfare.* He fought five campaigns in different theaters between Moscow and Paris. In 1793, even before he turned thirteen years, Clausewitz participated as an officer candidate in the campaign of the allies against revolutionary France where he experienced his first combat<sup>56</sup>. During this campaign, the young Clausewitz took part in the siege of Valmy of which Goethe later said was the signal of a new era of world history. After a long period of routine duty and officer education, Clausewitz, being the adjutant of Prince August of Prussia, experienced the

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<sup>54</sup> Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, pp. 25–172; Schössler, *Carl von Clausewitz*, Hamburg, 1991; Parkinson, Roger, *Clausewitz*, New York: Stein and Day, 1979; Bassford, *Clausewitz and his works*, p. 3-6; Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, pp. 11-40; Uwe Hartmann, *Carl von Clausewitz, Erkenntnis, Bildung, Generalstabsausbildung*, München: Olzog Verlag, 1998, pp. 14-41.

<sup>55</sup> Bassford, *Clausewitz and his works*, p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, p. 29.

decisive, even humiliating defeat of the Prussian army against Napoleon in the battles at Jena and Auerstedt (1806). In the Prince's battalion, Clausewitz conducted a long-lasting retreat against overwhelming French forces until surrender was inevitable. In 1812, disappointed about the decision of the Prussian king to support Napoleon's invasion of Russia with a Prussian Expeditionary Corps, Clausewitz resigned from Prussian service to become a Russian officer. Although handicapped because of his ignorance of the Russian language, Clausewitz participated in the strategic decision-making process on how to encounter the French offensive. This included the main question of whether the defense should be conducted as far west as possible or after the French 'Grand Army' attack had reached its point of culmination.<sup>57</sup> Then, between 1813 and 1815, Clausewitz served as a general staff officer on corps level, initially in the Russian-German legion, later as chief of staff in the III. Prussian Corps. At Ligny in 1815, his corps achieved the operational preconditions for the decisive attack against Napoleon at Waterloo.

After a long period of nearly fifteen years at the War Academy, Clausewitz was given command of artillery brigades stationed in East Prussia. When revolutions in France and Poland signaled danger of a new war in Europe, Clausewitz again became chief of staff, which, this time, was for a military formation to observe the border with Poland.<sup>58</sup> However, Clausewitz's burning desire to become assigned as a commander of a major military formation remained unfulfilled.

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<sup>57</sup> Clausewitz, Carl von, "The campaign of 1812 in Russia", in Carl von Clausewitz, *Historical and political writings*, Princeton University Press 1992, pp. 110-204.

<sup>58</sup> Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, pp. 396-430.

*Clausewitz dealt with the consequences of revolutions: the French Revolution and the 'Revolution in Military Affairs' (RMA)*<sup>59</sup>. The RMA that Clausewitz experienced originated from the French Revolution of 1789. The political and social results of the French Revolution meshed with changes in military institutions, tactics, equipment and training previously applicable or under development.<sup>60</sup>

Only a few years later, the centralized French state's capacity to extract taxes and to conscript motivated citizens<sup>61</sup>, the application of the "tiralleur" tactics as an easy and rapid method for training large numbers of infantry soldiers, the introduction of requisition as a logistical principle, and the enhanced mobility of the artillery enabled Napoleon to develop and implement military strategies that were completely different from the cabinet wars of the old system: Napoleon made war more offensive, more aggressive, and more costly. Aiming to achieve significant political results, the French emperor sought decisively to defeat the enemy's armies as a prerequisite for immediate political negotiations. As Paret summarizes,

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<sup>59</sup> RMA can be defined as follows: An RMA "...occurs when application of new technologies into a significant number of military systems combines with innovative operational concepts and organizational adaptation in a way that fundamentally alters the character and conduct of conflict. It does so by producing a dramatic increase – often an order of magnitude or greater – in the combat potential and military effectiveness of armed forces" (Krepinevich, Andrew F., "Cavalry to Computer: The Pattern of Military Revolutions", in Strategy and Force Planning Faculty (eds.), *Strategy and Force Planning*, Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1997, p. 430). In *On War*, Clausewitz points out that the contemporary RMA was not caused by new technologies. "Clearly the tremendous effects of the French Revolution abroad were caused not so much by new military methods and concepts as by radical changes in policies and administration, by the new character of government, altered conditions of the French people, and the like" (Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 609).

<sup>60</sup> Taking part in the revolutionary wars, Clausewitz realized the difference between his military training and the reality of war (Clausewitz, Carl von, "From Observations on Prussia in Her Great Catastrophe", in Carl von Clausewitz, *Historical and Political Writings*, pp. 40-41).

<sup>61</sup> See Tilly, Charles, "State and Counterrevolution in France", *Social Research* 65, N. 1 (Spring 1989), pp. 71-97.

The new political aim – conquest and the destruction of old political entities – brought with it a new strategic and tactical mission: the destruction of the enemy's military power.<sup>62</sup> Clausewitz experienced this revolution in warfare from its early beginnings in 1792 to its highly developed forms in 1813 – 1815. He, therefore, realized that strategy-making is a process that is influenced by several dimensions, for example policies, politics, social conditions, economy, technology, and organization. Most importantly, Clausewitz recognized the difficulties of states and military forces taking notice and adjusting themselves to revolutionary changes in opposing states.<sup>63</sup>

*Clausewitz served in multinational environments.* As mentioned above, Clausewitz cooperated with Russian officers during the 1812 campaign and as a general staff officer in the multinational military corps, the German-Russian Legion<sup>64</sup>, established in 1813.<sup>65</sup> As a result, Clausewitz became a close witness of coalition warfare and strategy-making.<sup>66</sup>

*Clausewitz gathered wide experience in the field of policies and politics.* During the reform of the Prussian state and military (1807-1819), Clausewitz, as the personal assistant of General Gerhard von Scharnhorst, became highly involved in policies and

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<sup>62</sup> Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, p. 32. See also Paret, Peter, "Napoleon and the Revolution in War", in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy. From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, Princeton, 1986, pp. 129-130. Napoleon did not invent all these characteristics himself, but he was brilliant in combining all the innovations of different people in a cohesive conduct of warfare. See Paret, Peter, "Introduction", in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy*, p. 7; Paret, *Napoleon and the Revolution in War*, p. 127; Palmer, R.R., "Frederick the Great, Guibert, Bülow: From Dynastic to National War", in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy*, pp. 94, 105-119.

<sup>63</sup> Clausewitz, Carl von, *Historische Briefe über die großen Kriegserlebnisse im Oktober 1806*, neu herausgegeben und kommentiert von Joachim Niemeyer, Bonn: Ferd. Dümmler Verlag, 1977.

<sup>64</sup> See Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, pp. 226-227, 241-243.

<sup>65</sup> At this time, it was not unusual for officers to serve for foreign countries. However, Clausewitz's resignation occurred not without conflicts. See Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, pp. 220-221.

<sup>66</sup> Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, pp. 102-105; Rothfels, Hans, *Carl von Clausewitz. Politik und Krieg. Eine ideengeschichtliche Studie*, Berlin 1920, pp. 198-200, 202-203.

politics.<sup>67</sup> Scharnhorst was responsible for the transformation of the Prussian military forces that had to be compatible with the reform of the state as a whole. In 1807, the Prussian king, Frederick William IV. established the Military Reorganization Commission ('Militär-Reorganisations-Kommission'; MRK) and ordered the Commission to create the foundations of a new state. The head of the Commission was a civilian, the Staatsminister Freiherr vom und zum Stein, with several high-ranking officers, among them Scharnhorst, as the members of the Commission. One main goal of the Commission's work was unifying the nation and the army, thus provoking the awakening of the nation as a prerequisite for liberty and liberation. Out of this political goal, the social function of the new army was deduced that it would be the school of a new nation and that the military reforms would be completed by comprehensive political reform.<sup>68</sup>

When those with traditional political views were excluded, all members of the Commission agreed with what Stein assumed was the fundamental prerequisite for the success of the reform: "We shall wait in vain for the awakening in our country of that public spirit which the English and the French and other peoples possess, if we do not imitate them in setting for our military leaders certain bounds and limitations which they must not disregard."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, pp. 137-146; Hahlweg, Werner, "Das Clausewitz-Bild einst und jetzt", in: Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, Berlin, <sup>19/20</sup>1991, pp. 26-34; Hartmann, *Carl von Clausewitz, Erkenntnis, Bildung, Generalstabsausbildung*, pp. 26-30; Paret/ Moran, *Part Two: Introduction*, p. 6.

<sup>68</sup> Detailed information in Craig, Gordon A., *The Politics of the Prussian Army 1640-1945*, London/Oxford/New York, 1955/64, pp. 37-53; see also Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, pp. 137-46.

<sup>69</sup> Stein, quoted in Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army 1640-1945*, p. XIII. Clausewitz's relationship to the state is deeply elaborated by Paret, Clausewitz. Essentially, Paret argues that "... we cannot understand the achievements and problems of his career and his private life unless we recognize that for him ... the state and its basis, the political vigor of society, occupied places very near the center

The MRK was an outstanding example of civil-military cooperation during a period of comprehensive state making activities. The involvement of officers in this process created a new understanding of their professionalism by cooperating with politicians, and reflecting upon the socio-political preconditions and effects of military reorganizations, thereby accepting the supremacy of policies and politics.

Later, at the end of 1812 when Clausewitz had already been a Russian officer, he contributed decisively to the making of the agreement between General York von Wartenburg, the leader of the Prussian auxiliary corps attached to the Grand Army of Napoleon, and the Russian General Diebitsch. That agreement, called Tauroggen-Convention after its location, accelerated not only the destruction of Napoleon's Grand Army, but also facilitated the creation of new alliances in Europe that finally led to its liberation from French occupation.<sup>70</sup> Around 1818, Clausewitz even applied for the assignment of Prussian attaché in London that finally was refused.<sup>71</sup>

*Clausewitz practiced advance educational methods.* He participated in progressive officer education courses conducted by Scharnhorst and, later, worked as a teacher in military subjects, such as tactics and strategy. Early in the 1790's, Scharnhorst recognized the first signs of the ongoing RMA in France. He

... called attention to the significance of her coherent, aggressive strategy, which served interests that could be expressed in national rather than dynastic terms, the rapidity with which troops now moved, the willingness

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of his thought" (Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, p. 6).

<sup>70</sup> Clausewitz was well aware of the likely consequences of this agreement for the politics of Prussia and, definitely, for the Prussian general York. See Clausewitz, *The Campaign of 1812 in Russia*, pp. 194-200; see also Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, pp. 229-232.

<sup>71</sup> Paret, Peter, "Bemerkungen zu dem Versuch von Clausewitz, zum Gesandten in London ernannt zu werden", in *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel- und Ostdeutschlands*, Bd. 26, 1977, pp. 161-172.

to accept huge casualties, and the freedom and enthusiasm of the individual soldier.”<sup>72</sup>

When Gerhard von Scharnhorst<sup>73</sup> entered Prussian service, he became the director of an educational course for officer candidates<sup>74</sup>. Clausewitz attended the first course and finished as Scharnhorst’s best disciple. Therefore, Clausewitz was selected not only to instruct officers at the Kriegsakademie<sup>75</sup> founded as part of the military reform in 1810 but also to educate the crown prince<sup>76</sup> in military affairs. The task to educate the strategic mind of the future king was definitely of utmost strategic importance.

*Finally, Clausewitz gathered experiences in the field of civil-military relations.* During his assignment as Scharnhorst’s assistant, Clausewitz was responsible for public relation activities of the reform party.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, Clausewitz became heavily involved in the planning of supplementary military formations, called the ‘Landwehr’ and the ‘Landsturm’.<sup>78</sup> Finally, these plans were used in 1813 when the Prussian king Frederick William III. addressed his people to insurrect against Napoleon. Prior to the war of liberation, however, Clausewitz disputed with others in the political-military

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<sup>72</sup> Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, p. 32. The educational relationship between Scharnhorst and Clausewitz is analyzed in Hartmann, *Clausewitz. Erkenntnis, Bildung, Generalstabsausbildung*, pp. 25-32. See also Clausewitz’s description of Scharnhorst as a teacher in “On the Life and Character of Scharnhorst”, in Carl von Clausewitz, *Historical and Political Writings*, pp. 85-109.

<sup>73</sup> Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, pp. 56-77; White, Charles E., *The Enlightened Soldier*, 1989.

<sup>74</sup> Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, p. 97.

<sup>75</sup> See Rosen, Claus von, “Carl von Clausewitz”, in Detlef Bald, Uwe Hartmann, Claus von Rosen (eds.), *Klassiker der Pädagogik im deutschen Militär*, Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1999, pp. 86-102.

<sup>76</sup> See Clausewitz’s letter to the crown prince, dated 29<sup>th</sup> March 1812, just before Clausewitz left Prussia, in Clausewitz, Carl von, *Verstreute kleine Schriften*, edited by Werner Hahlweg, Osnabrück 1979, pp. 169-171.

<sup>77</sup> As early as 1808, Clausewitz wrote newspaper articles about the reform of the Prussian state. Later, asked by Gneisenau, Clausewitz wrote an account of the 1813 campaign that aimed to “... justify the conduct of the war to the public and raise enthusiasm for the fighting ahead” (Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, p. 240). From the beginning of the reform period, Clausewitz started to address the people in order to win their support for the political goals of the reform party.

<sup>78</sup> After 1815, Clausewitz continued to fight against the opponents of the Landwehr as an institution



administration about the opportune time to initiate the people's insurrection.<sup>79</sup> Realizing that Frederick William III. was likely to act very cautiously, Clausewitz left Prussian service and joined the Russian army, thus disobeying the king's orders. Disputing with the king, Clausewitz experienced the limits of loyalty and the strong feelings of individual responsibility and conscientious decisions. In his famous "Political Declaration", addressed to Frederick William III, Clausewitz definitely intended to expose the king, and to motivate the Prussian people<sup>80</sup>:

As devoted as we are to the government, we cannot deny that in the main it is lack of confidence in the government that causes general discouragement. Equally, the government has little confidence in its subjects and even in itself. Its total lack of faith in itself and others is the general cause of our public opinion; and the constant influence of weaklings, profligates, and shirkers on this opinion is the cause of the public mood. I formally renounce this opinion and mood.... I renounce the facile hope of being saved by chance. (...) I believe and confess that a people can value nothing more highly than the dignity and liberty of its existence. That it must defend these to the last drop of its blood. That there is no higher duty to fulfill, no higher law to obey.<sup>81</sup>

Clausewitz's diversity of military assignments and richness of expertise in policies, politics, strategy, and tactics appears to be an idealtypus of the military walk of life. Nevertheless, to understand Clausewitz, it is not only important to get an impression of his background but also to recognize his approach in dealing with experience. Experience is important; however, it is more important to reflect upon it. Clausewitz

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that 'places weapons in the hands of the people'. See Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, pp. 287-306.

<sup>79</sup> As early as in 1807, Clausewitz sought to sow the seed of an insurrection of the Prussian people. In 1808, Clausewitz pressed to stimulate insurrection for the first time. See also Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, p. 218: "Drawing on the fighting in the Vendee and Spain he develops a plan for guerrilla warfare, the size and organization of the irregular force to be raised, the tactical instructions to be issued, and the missions it should be assigned."

<sup>80</sup> However, the *Political Declarations* were not published in 1812/13.

<sup>81</sup> Clausewitz, Carl von, "Political Declaration", in Carl von Clausewitz, *Historical and Political Writings*, p. 290. See also Paret/Moran, *Part Two: Introduction*, p. 226.

intensively thought experience through, and used experience to educate himself. Very early, he practiced education as a unity of philosophy and experience, as a reflection upon political and military experience with the aim of learning about war and strategy. Consequently, Clausewitz's theories of war and strategy derive from experience *and* reflection – upon five wars, upon reform politics, upon revolutionary strategies and tactics, upon multinationality, and upon civil-military relations.

However, Clausewitz assumed his personal background as not sufficient to meet the requirements of science and truth. Therefore, Clausewitz dove deeply into military history in order to investigate the overall nature of war independently from the current understanding of war and his own experiences. In the end, he did historical research on more than 140 military campaigns, comprising, for example, the operations of King Adolphus in the 30-year-war, the operations of Frederick the Great, and Napoleon.

To sum up, Clausewitz definitely was a highly experienced officer who actually became occupied with outstanding challenges. For the purpose of this research, it is most important to highlight that Clausewitz elaborated his theory of war and strategy within an environment characterized by new threats, revolutionary changes in warfare, and the growing importance of domestic politics in determining strategy. Bassford's assessment is entirely correct when he writes, "Clausewitz was much more than a strategist: he was a historian and a historical philosopher, a political theorist, and a practical soldier of wide experience."<sup>82</sup>

## B. OUTLINE OF CLAUSEWITZ'S THEORETICAL WORKS

In his theoretical works, Clausewitz covers a wide range of issues that are related to military affairs. Clearly, his main occupation is the history of warfare; however, history of warfare – beneath his personal experience in war - remains “only” a source to reflect upon with the ultimate aim of writing a comprehensive theory of war. The result of Clausewitz’s deliberations on the theory of war is his opus magna, *On War*. Reflecting upon history and his own experiences in the political and military realms, Clausewitz recognizes the widespread links of war with other areas of social life, in particular with policies and politics<sup>83</sup>. Applying his theory to the practice of war, Clausewitz wrote several security studies and did intensive research, ranging from the character of nations to questions of military organization.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, Clausewitz published articles to support the position of the reformer struggling with traditionalists over the reform of the Prussian state<sup>85</sup>, and wrote papers as didactical means to facilitate the (self-) education of (future) officers<sup>86</sup>. Last but not least, Clausewitz wrote several short articles on what today is called humanities, covering philosophy, art, literature<sup>87</sup>, and several hundreds of

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<sup>82</sup> Bassford, *Clausewitz and his works*, p. 2.

<sup>83</sup> To translate the German word “Politik”, policy or politics can be used. However, these two words indicate differing emphasis. As Bassford argues, “‘Policy’ may be defined as rational action, undertaken by a group which already has power, in order to maintain and extend that power. Politics, in contrast, is simply the process (comprising an inchoate mix of rational, irrational, and non-rational elements) by which power is distributed within a given society” (Bassford, *Clausewitz and his works*, p. 17).

<sup>84</sup> See Clausewitz, Carl von: *Historical and political writings*, ed. and trans. by Peter Paret and Daniel Moran, Princeton University Press, 1992; Clausewitz, Carl von, *Verstreute kleine Schriften*, ed. by Werner Hahlweg, Osnabrück 1979; Clausewitz, Carl von, *Schriften – Aufsätze – Studien – Briefe*, ed. by Werner Hahlweg, 2. Bd., Teilbd. 2, Göttingen 1990.

<sup>85</sup> Paret/Moran, *Part Two: Introduction*, p. 227.

<sup>86</sup> Rosen, *Carl von Clausewitz*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>87</sup> Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, pp. 169-208; Stübig, Heinz, “Clausewitz in Yverdon”, in *Paedagogica Historica*, XVII (1977), pp. 440-455; Clausewitz, Carl von, “Letter to Fichte”, in Carl

letters, partly business letters but most often letters to his wife<sup>88</sup>, in which he expressed personal judgments not only on his own life but also on the current political situation in Europe.

Criticizing Heinrich von Bülow's definition of strategy<sup>89</sup> in his first theoretical paper, written in 1804, Clausewitz laid the decisive cornerstone for his further deliberations on war.<sup>90</sup> While Bülow defined strategy as "... all military movements out of the enemy's cannon range or range of vision"<sup>91</sup>, Clausewitz highlighted the importance of the purpose for military strategic thinking and planning when he wrote: "... strategy forms the theory of using battles for the purposes of the war"<sup>92</sup>. The main reason to combine strategy and purpose tightly was that the theory of war would otherwise be in contradiction to the reality of war. By introducing the political purpose into the theory of war, Clausewitz detects the key element to explain continuities as well as diversities of war and strategy. Emphasizing the fundamental interrelationship between (political) purpose and strategy, Clausewitz liberates strategic thinking from the geographical, one-dimensional calculations some strategists had proposed as the proper way to solve strategic problems; thereby, the Prussian philosopher of war gives war a meaning, and places war as a social phenomenon within the multidimensional field of policies and

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von Clausewitz, *Historical and political writings*, pp. 279-284.

<sup>88</sup> Linnebach, Karl (ed.), *Karl und Marie von Clausewitz. Ein Lebensbild in Briefen und Tagebuchblättern*, Berlin: Verlag von Martin Warneck, 1916.

<sup>89</sup> See Aron, Raymond, *Clausewitz. Den Krieg denken*, Propyläen, 1980, pp. 610-612.

<sup>90</sup> Clausewitz, Carl von, *Strategie aus dem Jahr 1804, mit Zusätzen von 1808 and 1809*, ed. by E. Kessel, Hamburg, 1937. See also Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, pp. 89-97.

<sup>91</sup> Bülow, Heinrich D. von, *Lehrsätze des neuern Krieges*, Berlin, 1805, p. 1 (quoted in Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 91). By contrast, "Tactical are all movements within this range" (ibid.).

<sup>92</sup> Clausewitz, *Strategie aus dem Jahr 1804*, p. 62 (quoted in Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, p. 91). By contrast, "tactics constitutes the theory of the use of armed forces in battle..." (ibid.). Later, Clausewitz uses these definitions in *On War*.

politics. In the end, Clausewitz opened a wide array of issues necessary to consider when dealing with strategy.

In the following subchapter<sup>93</sup>, some main propositions of Clausewitz's theory of war and strategy are discussed. Prior to this, some remarks on the latter's philosophy of science are necessary in order to facilitate understanding. However, even though propositions are separated here for analytical reasons, they must not be seen as isolated but integrated in a comprehensive theoretical approach.

## **1. Philosophy and Experience**

The main characteristic of Clausewitz's theory of war is the astonishingly high amount of philosophical-theoretical reflection upon war as an observable phenomenon. As Clausewitz argues in the author's preface of *On War*,

Analysis and observation, theory and experience must never disdain or exclude each other; on the contrary, they support each other. The propositions of this book therefore, like short spans of an arch, base their axioms on the secure foundation either of experience or the nature of war as such, and are thus adequately buttressed.<sup>94</sup>

Consequently, on the one side, observable phenomena of war must be related to theoretical considerations; on the other side, logical conclusions must be tested against the reality. Being aware of the tendency in German philosophy to reflect upon social

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<sup>93</sup> This research paper does not reflect the development of Clausewitz's works. Instead, it refers to the latest versions of his theory. The development of Clausewitz can be traced in Hahlweg, *Das Clausewitz-Bild*, pp. 11-26 and 34-40; Gat, Azar, "Clausewitz's final notes", in *Militär-geschichtliche Mitteilungen*, ed. by Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, 1/1989, pp. 45-50.

<sup>94</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 61. See also Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, pp. 5-6.

affairs in a pure rationalist way that disregards the empirical reality, Clausewitz states that *On War* is an

... attempt to investigate the essence of the phenomena of war and to indicate the links between these phenomena and the nature of their component parts. No logical conclusion has been avoided; but whenever the thread became too thin I have preferred to break it off and go back to the relevant phenomena of experience. Just as some plants bear fruit only if they don't shoot up too high, so in the practical arts the leaves and flowers of theory must be pruned and the plant kept close to its proper soil - experience.<sup>95</sup>

Because of this interaction between idealism and realism, Clausewitz often conducts philosophical-logical considerations that he, some pages later, confronts against the reality of war in order to gain theoretical insights in war and warfare. Consequently, Clausewitz's theory of war contains two different concepts: *absolute war* as a philosophical concept (based on logical thinking), and *real war* as an empirical concept (based on history and experience). Whenever Clausewitz talks about war, the reader must ask himself what kind of war Clausewitz reflects upon.<sup>96</sup>

However, Clausewitz does not apply the dialectical modes of argumentation that oscillates between the concepts of absolute and real war in order to confuse the reader. By contrast, Clausewitz's aim is to achieve analytical insights. Similar to the *Idealtypus*-concept developed by the German sociologist Max Weber nearly 100 years later<sup>97</sup>, Clausewitz gains important insights in explaining why war in reality is different from its logical construction. For example, when he asked why war had not developed his absolute form as theory suggests when two independent forces attempt to impose their

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<sup>95</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 61.

<sup>96</sup> Hahlweg, *Das Clausewitz-Bild*, p. 42. Aron points out that the absolute war is an idealtyp, not an ideal (Aron, *Clausewitz. Den Krieg denken*, p. 692).

will on each other, Clausewitz discovered several characteristics of war: that war is never an isolated act; that war does not consist of a single short blow; that in war the result is never final.<sup>98</sup> Thus, in the end, Clausewitz discovers the influence of politics and policies on war and strategy.

To proof philosophical-logical deliberations or any proposition induced by personal experience, Clausewitz assesses history as the most proper testing ground, resulting in history being more than the mere reconstruction of what had happened. For the theory of war, history must become truly *critical* history that, especially, detects cause-effect relations, and evaluates the military means employed to achieve specific goals. Clausewitz argues,

We distinguish between the *critical approach* and the plain narrative of a historical event, which merely arranges facts one after another, and at most touches on their immediate causal links. Three different intellectual activities may be contained in the critical approach. First, the discovery and interpretation of equivocal facts. This is historical research proper, and has nothing in common with theory. Second, the tracing of effects back to their causes. This is *critical analysis proper*. It is essential for theory; for whatever in theory is to be defined, supported, or simply described by reference to experience can only be dealt with in this manner. Third, the investigation and evaluation of means employed. This last is criticism proper, involving praise and censure. Here theory serves history, or rather the lessons to be drawn from history. In the last two activities which are the truly critical parts of historical inquiry, it is vital to analyze everything down to its basic elements, to inconvertible truth. One must not stop half-way, as is so often done, at some arbitrary assumption or hypothesis.<sup>99</sup>

In Clausewitz's view, cause-effect relations and the evaluation of military action cannot be deduced from *absolute* principles of war and warfare. By contrast, Clausewitz

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<sup>97</sup> Weber, Max, *Essays in Sociology*, edited by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, New York 1958.

<sup>98</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 78-80.

<sup>99</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 156. Paret/Moran, *Introduction*, pp. 3-14 and 223 analyze Clausewitz's understanding of history.

connects the critical approach with the hermeneutical concept of historicism. As Bassdorf reveals,

Clausewitz saw history in relative terms, rejecting absolute categories, standards, and values. The past has to be accepted on its own terms. The historian must attempt to enter into the mindsets and attitudes of any given period, the ‘spirit of the age’.<sup>100</sup>

Seen through the screen of historicism, war and strategy vary depending on the changing nature of their political, social, economical, technological, and ideological environment. Criticizing those strategic theorists who intend to construct a positive system of war and strategy containing absolute principles beyond historical variance, Clausewitz claimed that “... we must face the fact that war and its forms result from ideas, emotions, and conditions prevailing at the time – and to be quite honest we must admit that this was the case even when war assumed its absolute state under Bonaparte”.<sup>101</sup> “Ideas, emotions, and conditions prevailing at the time” implies that the “... same political object can elicit differing reactions from different peoples, and even from the same people at different times”.<sup>102</sup> Consequently, the understanding of war – as a historic event or in his current or future appearance – requires the reference to the “spirit of the age”. Nevertheless, beneath the uniqueness of historical situations, Clausewitz strived to reveal continuities in history to the greatest extent possible. This prevented him from over-emphasizing revolutions in the political or military realms.

However, it is not only the relativity of history that causes contradictions between general principles of war and the reality of war. Worse (from the viewpoint of the theorists who intend to create parsimonious theories), “any given situation (in war; U.H.)

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<sup>100</sup> Bassford, *Clausewitz and his works*, p. 8; see also Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, pp. 82, 86-87.

<sup>101</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 580



requires that probabilities be calculated in the light of circumstances...”<sup>103</sup>. In addition, by far the worst from a rational point of view, war and warfare are extremely characterized by chance: “No other human activity is so continuously or universally bound up with chance. And through the element of chance, guesswork and luck come to play a great part in war.”<sup>104</sup>

Finally, as a concluding insight from his deliberations on philosophy of science, Clausewitz realizes that the development of a scientific theory of war and strategy cannot follow the example of the very successful natural sciences. Instead, war appears to be rather an art. However, war is characterized by an important difference; warfare is not an action against an inanimate matter. By contrast, war is a social interaction, a communication between intelligent adversaries, within an environment that causes danger, physical exhaustion, lack of information, and friction.<sup>105</sup> Assessing war as the continuation of discourse with the addition of other means in a resisting element, Clausewitz concludes that military leadership is less characterized by knowledge and more founded on character, talent, and even genius. Military leadership requires “(a) sensitive and discriminating judgment (...); (and) a skilled intelligence to scent out the truth.”<sup>106</sup> Finally, intellectual activity in war “... leaves the field of exact sciences of logic and mathematics. It then becomes an art in the broadest meaning of the term – the faculty

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<sup>102</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 81.

<sup>103</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 85.

<sup>104</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 85.

<sup>105</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 113-121.

<sup>106</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 101.

of using judgment to detect the most important and decisive elements in the vast array of facts and situations.”<sup>107</sup>

In general, Clausewitz does not see the possibility of developing a theory of war that allows the prescription of military action. As Paret and Moran argues, “The purpose of his theoretical writings was not to teach a specific doctrine that would lead to successful strategies and increase operational effectiveness, but rather to contribute to an understanding of war as an apparently permanent element of human experience.”<sup>108</sup> These (self-) limitations of theory were the logical conclusion of Clausewitz’s reflection upon the nature of war:

Theory exists so that one need not start afresh each time sorting out the material and plowing through it, but will find it ready to hand and in good order. It is meant to educate the mind of the future commander, or, more accurately, to guide him in his self-education, not to accompany him to the battlefield; just as a wise teacher guides and stimulates a young man’s intellectual development, but is careful not to lead him by the hand for the rest of his life.<sup>109</sup>

In the end, when Clausewitz uses the word ‘philosophy’, he demands the creation of a new model of science<sup>110</sup> that is more proper to the nature of war than the natural or positivist sciences. Finally, Clausewitz develops the prototype of the German concept of humanities (“Geisteswissenschaften”) that, nearly 100 years later, found scientific reputation with Wilhelm Dilthey’s works about hermeneutics.<sup>111</sup> This is beyond purely academic interest. By contrast, Clausewitz offers hermeneutics as intellectual tools to

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<sup>107</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 585.

<sup>108</sup> Paret/Moran, *Part Two: Introduction*, p. 4.

<sup>109</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 141.

<sup>110</sup> As Paret and Moran point out, the terms “wissenschaftlich” or “philosophisch” are often used interchangeably by Clausewitz (Paret/Moran, *Part Two: Introduction*, p. 3). See also Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, p. 155 (footnote 18).

<sup>111</sup> Clausewitz’s contribution to create the “Geisteswissenschaften” and his compatibility with F.D.E. Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics and dialectics is reconstructed in Hartmann, *Carl von Clausewitz*.

assess war and develop strategies – not only in the classrooms of war academies but also in exercises and real war. Furthermore, lacking any opportunity to rely on scientific military principles, commanders are not justified to act autonomously. Instead, thinking in terms of “Geisteswissenschaften”, commanders are set free to realize that war is a political act – “... which excludes the autonomy of the military conduct of operations.”<sup>112</sup>

## 2. Major Propositions

By confronting philosophical-logical deliberations with historical-empirical experience, Clausewitz gains outstanding insights into the nature of war and strategy. In the following, these insights are presented by separating them into different propositions. Again, one should be aware that these propositions are only separated for analytical reasons.

### *Proposition 1: War is an act of force that aims for peace*

Essentially, war is the use of force in order to achieve goals the opponent intends to prevent. Clausewitz uses the analogy of a duel to illustrate this forceful relationship:

War is nothing but a duel on a larger scale. Countless duels go to make up war, but a picture of it as a whole can be formed by imaging a pair of wrestlers. Each tries through physical force to compel the other to do his will; his *immediate* aim is to *throw* his opponent in order to make him incapable of further resistance. *War is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will.*<sup>113</sup>

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Erkenntnis, Bildung, Generalstabsausbildung, pp. 93-132.

<sup>112</sup> Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, p. 174.

<sup>113</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 75.

By using the analogy of a duel, Clausewitz does not intend to emphasize that war is mainly characterized by the deployment of large military forces. Certainly, this would have been trivial. By contrast, the emphasis is put on the existence of an *independent will on both sides of the warring fractions, and on their willingness to use force* in order to achieve specific goals. Consequently, Clausewitz considers the definition of purposes and the willingness to use force to achieve these purposes as the decisive elements of war and strategy. This includes recognizing that the enemy, too, not only has preferences and choices but also restraints, and that the enemy is an intelligent adversary.

War as an act of violence can only be understood comprehensively with regard to the final objective of war, that is peace. Therefore, strategy makers must always keep the intended peace in mind. This “principle” of thinking is justified for two reasons. First, strategy making in accordance with the methods of hermeneutics and dialectics requires an holistic intellectual approach that must have already finished its reflection upon the final action (here: peace) before the first step (here: war) is done.<sup>114</sup> Second, the influence of the objective of peace on strategy-making is the logical consequence of the war’s “... immediate aim ... to throw his opponent in order to make him incapable of further resistance”. Consequently, strategy-making must consider a future peace order that the adversary finds tolerable.

*Proposition 2: War is a paradoxical trinity*

Realizing that there are neither absolute principles nor single social players that determine the phenomenon of war, Clausewitz defines war as a chameleon that lives in

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<sup>114</sup> Hahlweg, *Das Clausewitz-Bild*, p. 43.

an environment best characterized as a paradoxical trinity. Why and how war is started, conducted and ended, is predominately the result of three variables that function like magnets, determining the movement of the iron object that is in between, in this case, the war. These magnets are (1) the blind natural force of violence, hatred, and enmity; (2) the creative spirit taking advantage of the play of chance and probability, and (3) the rationality that makes war a subordinated instrument of policy. In Clausewitz's words,

War is more than a true chameleon that slightly adapts its characteristics to the given case. As a total phenomenon its dominant tendencies always make war a paradoxical trinity – composed of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, which are to be regarded as a blind natural force; of the play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free of roam; and of its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone.

Based on the fundamental insight that war is a social intercourse, these magnets are real social players, comprising mainly of (1) the people; (2) the commander and his military forces; and (3) the government. As Clausewitz puts it,

The first of these three aspects mainly concerns the people; the second the commander and his army; the third the government. The passions that are to be kindled in war must already be inherent in the people; the scope which the play of courage and talent will enjoy in the realm of probability and chance depends on the particular character of the commander and the army; but the political aims are the business of government alone.

Any theory of war that aims to refuse any contradiction with reality needs to integrate these social players:

These three tendencies are like three different codes of law, deep-rooted in their subject and yet variable in their relationship to one another. A theory that ignores any one of them or seeks to fix an arbitrary relationship between them would conflict with reality to such an extent that for this reason alone it would be totally useless. Our task therefore is to develop a theory that maintains a balance between these three tendencies, like an object suspended between three magnets.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 89.

However, the magnets might not have the same power to influence their common object. In determining the actual appearance of war, the government might gain more influence than the people or the commander. On the other side, the strength of each of the social players is subject to change, even during war. Consequently, the variables that determine war are bound in a complex interrelationship. Furthermore, to make it even more complex, war can – in form of feedback – change the power relationship between the three dominant social actors. Strategy-making as an institutional process has to meet the requirements of this complexity.

*Proposition 3: War is the continuation of policies and politics*

Testing his idealtyp considerations about *absolute war* against the reality of war, and realizing war does not necessarily escalate to its absolute form but, instead, often remains rather limited, Clausewitz recognized the permanent dependence of war on policies and politics. As Aron argues, “It is not the initial conception of absolute war which allows the historical diversity of wars to be subsumed under a single concept, but the intrinsically political nature of war.”<sup>116</sup>

Consequently, the Prussian war philosopher argues against those who claim that war suspends the intercourse between governments and peoples and “... replaces it by a wholly different condition, ruled by no law but its own”. He writes,

... war is simply a continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means. We deliberately use the phrase ‘with the addition of other means’ because we also want to make it clear that war in itself does not suspend political intercourse or change it into something entirely different. In essentials that intercourse continues, irrespective of the means it employs. The main lines along which military events progress, and to which they are restricted, are political lines that continue throughout the war into the subsequent peace. How could it be otherwise? Do political relations between peoples and between their governments stop when diplomatic notes are no longer exchanged? Is war not just another expression of their thoughts, another form of speech or writing? Its grammar, indeed, may be its own, but not its logic.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, p. 81.

<sup>117</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 605.

In the German original, Clausewitz uses the term ‘Politik’. At first, ‘Politik’ means the policy of the state’s government. However, ‘Politik’ also comprises the entire interplay of the social actors as well as the character and the institutions of the state involved:

“First, ... it is clear that war should never be thought of as *something autonomous* but always as an *instrument of policy*; otherwise the entire history of war would contradict us. Only this approach will enable us to penetrate the problem intelligently. Second, this way of looking at it will show us how wars must vary with the nature of their motives and of the situations which give rise to them.”<sup>118</sup>

Clausewitz highlights these complex policies and politics-dimensions of strategy-making when he writes,

Once the antagonists have ceased to be mere figments of a theory and become actual states and governments, when war is no longer a theoretical affair but a series of actions obeying its own peculiar laws, reality supplies the data from which we can deduce the unknown that lies ahead. From the enemy’s character, from his institutions, the state of his affairs and his general situation, each side, using the *laws of probability*, forms an estimate of its opponent’s likely course and acts accordingly.<sup>119</sup>

Bassford is precise when he argues that, “War is an expression of both policy and politics, but ‘politics’ is the interplay of conflicting forces (inside the state; U.H.), not the execution of one-sided policy initiatives”.<sup>120</sup> Consequently, all social actors of state and society (or more correctly, the assessment of the social actors by and on both sides of the war and, actually, of the neutral states<sup>121</sup>) influence the conduct of war. Even if the

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<sup>118</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 88.

<sup>119</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 80.

<sup>120</sup> Bassford, *Clausewitz and his works*, p. 17. See also Gray who highlights the *process* character of policy: “If strategy is the agent of policy, so policy is the product of an ongoing political process, just as strategy itself is the product of an ongoing strategy-making process” (Gray, *Modern Strategy*, p. 30).

<sup>121</sup> “To discover how much of our resources must be mobilized for war, we must first examine our own political aim and that of the enemy. We must gauge the strength and situation of the opposing state. We must gauge the character and abilities of its government and people and do the same in

military commander tries to prevent any outside influence on the military planning and decision-making process, this attempt definitely serves as evidence for the truth of Clausewitz's proposition: that war (and preparation of war) is always an interplay of social actors. Finally, Clausewitz concludes, "He who maintains, as is so often the case, that politics should not interfere with the conduct of a war has not grasped the ABCs of grand strategy."<sup>122</sup>

Policies and politics as the interplay between different states and different social actors within the states determine the political objectives of war. Consequently, this has a decisive impact on the definition of the military goals. Clausewitz displays the relationship between political objectives and military aims as follows:

The more powerful and inspiring the motives for war, ... the more closely will the military aims and the political objects of war coincide, and the more military and less political will war appear to be. On the other hand, the less intense the motives, the less will the military element's natural tendency to violence coincide with political directives. As a result, war will be driven further from its natural course, the political object will be more and more at variance with the aim of ideal war, and the conflict will seem increasingly *political* in character<sup>123</sup>.

Apparently, the motives for war are created in the intercourse between the states and the social players within the states. If social players commonly perceive political objectives as a justification for the highest possible military effort, war increasingly develops towards the philosophical construct of absolute war. By contrast, less motivation for war makes war appear more political. In the end, this might lead to the extreme that political objectives contradict with even the smallest military goals because the pursuit of military goals includes the nature of war: violence.

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regard to our own. Finally, we must evaluate the political sympathies of other states and the effect the war may have on them" (Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 585-586).

<sup>122</sup> Clausewitz, Carl von, "Betrachtungen über einen künftigen Kriegsplan gegen Frankreich", written 1830, first published by the Historical Section of the General Staff as an appendix to Moltke's *Militärische Werke*, Teil I: *Militärische Korrespondenz*, Teil 4 (Berlin, 1902), pp. 181-197.

<sup>123</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 87-88.



Out of the fundamental insight in war as continuation of politics and policies, Clausewitz draws the conclusion that politicians should have primacy over the military - before, during, and after the war. Consequently, within the fascinating trinity, the commander should be institutionally subordinated to the political leader. Additionally, political supremacy is justified by peace as the ultimate end of war and by the high complexity of war that certainly would overwhelm the intellectual and moral capabilities of military commanders. Consequently, the complexity of war demands the intensive cooperation of all state agencies involved in strategy making.<sup>124</sup> Within this cooperative interrelationship, the commander is responsible for providing military expertise, and, if necessary, to defy and even to resist politicians if they pursue political objectives that the military means are not capable of achieving.<sup>125</sup> Thus, Clausewitz defies any separation of the military from the political implications of a strategic plan. "In practice, the 'grammar' of war and strategy shows policy what is, and what is not, possible."<sup>126</sup>

Demanding the supremacy of politicians and the cooperation of state agencies, Clausewitz does not advocate for a democratic and constitutional government as long as the state operates "... according to rational principles of efficiency and accountability"<sup>127</sup>. However, as a reformer, Clausewitz recognized the advantages of democracies in ensuring the supremacy of politicians and in improving the cooperation between state agencies in the strategy-making process.

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<sup>124</sup> Clausewitz argues "... that a major military development, or the plan for one, should be a matter for *purely* military opinion is unacceptable and can be damaging. Nor indeed is it sensible to summon soldiers ... and ask them for *purely military advice*" (Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 607).

<sup>125</sup> Gray, *Modern Strategy*, p. 44.

<sup>126</sup> Gray, *Modern Strategy*, p. 30; Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 605.

<sup>127</sup> Paret/Moran, *Part Two: Introduction*, p. 231.

*Proposition 4: War varies between rather limited or rather unlimited forms*

In theory, war has a tendency to escalate, to rise to the extreme. Escalation is mainly caused by the interaction between the opposing forces. In war as an act of force, each side "... compels its opponents to follow suit...".<sup>128</sup> This is because each side is concerned that the opponent might be able to overthrow him, and each side attempts to evaluate the enemy's power of resistance in order to assess its necessary own efforts. Logically, these interactions must cause the maximum exertion of strength. Consequently, with regard to strategy, absolute war demands

The fighting forces must be *destroyed*: that is, they must be *put in such a condition that they can no longer carry on the fight*. (...) The country must be occupied; otherwise the enemy could raise fresh military forces.<sup>129</sup>

Clausewitz, as a witness of Napoleon's warfare, saw real war heading towards the theoretical-logical absolute form<sup>130</sup>. However, as he learned from history, war often occurred in rather limited forms, depending on the power relations in the international system and the predominant policies and politics of the war fighting states. In these limited wars, opponents do not attempt to achieve decisive results; instead, they pursue only limited military aims, e.g. the seizure of enemy territory for bargaining purposes.<sup>131</sup> Sometimes, as Clausewitz realized, the causes of war are extremely limited in their scope:

... most former wars were waged largely in a state of equilibrium, or at least expressed tensions that were so limited, so infrequent, and feeble,

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<sup>128</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 77.

<sup>129</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 90.

<sup>130</sup> Clausewitz is not consistent in his terminology in this case. Absolute war as a consequence of logical considerations definitely cannot occur in reality. Real war is always constrained. However, Clausewitz sometimes describes Napoleon's way of warfare characterized by the striving for decisive results as 'absolute war'. The reason for this might have been the impressive mobilization of national resources that intends to raise the efforts to the greatest extent possible.

<sup>131</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 601-602

that the fighting that did occur during these periods was seldom followed by important results. Instead a battle might be fought to celebrate the birthday of a monarch (Hochkirch), to satisfy military honor (Kunersdorf), or to assuage a commander's vanity (Freiberg). In our opinion it is essential that a commander should recognize these circumstances and act in concert with their spirit.<sup>132</sup>

Consequently,

... the war leader must ... ask which victory he needs in order to attain his political ends. In the abstract, the alternative of victory by 'knockout' or victory on points asserts itself; in reality, it only indicates two extreme points between which are inserted many intermediates.<sup>133</sup>

However, war itself might change the political purposes that once limited it.<sup>134</sup>

All social actors of the fascinating trinity, when facing war, might change their initial positions, thus having an increasing or decreasing impact on political objectives and military aims and, consequently, on the means made available to achieve them. Clausewitz emphasizes that this process is not necessarily a rational undertaking. War is open to irrationality, to violent emotions. Sometimes, even for the government as a rational actor, it might be rational to surrender to the emotions of the people.

With regard to strategy-making, politicians and commanders must take the permanent possibility of escalation (and de-escalation) into account.

*Proposition 5: Strategy is the use of battle for the purpose of war*

In this proposition, Clausewitz highlights the meaning of the political purpose of war. Basically, military strategic planning starts with a political purpose given by politicians that military commanders have to transform into military aims. Consequently,

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<sup>132</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 222.

<sup>133</sup> Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, p. 83. See also Hahlweg, *Das Clausewitz-Bild*, p. 44.

<sup>134</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 92: "... the original political objects can greatly alter during the course of the war and may finally change entirely *since they are influenced by events and their probable consequences*".

strategic planning is harmed “... if policy is vague, if its objectives are ephemeral, or if it sets political constraints upon military activity that prevent generation of sufficient strategic effect to produce success”.<sup>135</sup>

Strategic effect depends on success in the field of operations<sup>136</sup> and tactics. Consequently, Clausewitz argues that, to achieve the military aim, not only the planning of battles but also the capability to fight them is the centerpiece. Ironically, this does not necessarily imply bloody clashes. As Bassford argues,

Clausewitz likened actual bloodshed to the occasional cash transaction in a business normally operating on credit. He did not say that a bloodless war of maneuver (a la Sun Tzu or Maurice de Saxe) is impossible, merely that maneuver by itself is meaningless. It must be backed up with the credible threat of battlefield success.<sup>137</sup>

Even if a mere demonstration of force is the military aim, this strategy is probably only successful if the adversary perceives the deployed forces as capable of conducting battles.

Furthermore, Clausewitz clarifies that military strategy is the level of planning between the political level and the tactical level. Consequently, strategy is an balancer between political ends and tactical means. If the strategic planning is faulty, even a substantial sequence of tactical victories may not be sufficient to achieve the political objectives. On the other hand, even the best strategy cannot reach its goals if no tactical victories are achieved.

*Proposition 6: War can have multiple ends but only a single means*

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<sup>135</sup> Gray, *Modern Strategy*, p. 44.

<sup>136</sup> Clausewitz himself did not use the term “operation”.

<sup>137</sup> Bassford, *Clausewitz and his works*, p. 29.

In theory as well as in reality, peace is the ultimate end of war. However, to re-establish peace does not necessarily imply the disarming of the enemy. By contrast, Clausewitz realizes that this purpose

... is in fact not always encountered in reality, and need not be fully achieved as a condition of peace. On no account should theory raise it to the level of a law. Many treaties have been concluded before one of the antagonists could be called powerless – even before the balance of power had been seriously altered. What is more, a review of actual cases shows a whole category of wars in which the very idea of *defeating the enemy* is unreal: those in which the enemy is substantially the stronger power.<sup>138</sup>

In reality, several ends of war can be detected that are well below the level of defeating the enemy. Clausewitz gives – besides the conclusion that defeating an enemy is generally not sound for the party that is substantially inferior – two reasons for this limitation in the war's ends: first, the probability of defeat may convince one party to end the war; and secondly, the costs of success might appear unacceptable for the other party.<sup>139</sup>

The probability of defeat as a goal-reducing factor is, in particular, true when the motives of war are slight. Then, "... we can imagine that the very faintest prospect of defeat might be enough to cause one side to yield." Looking through the adversary's eyes, Clausewitz concludes, "If from the very start the other side feels that this is probable, it will obviously concentrate on bringing about this probability rather than take the long way round and totally defeat the enemy."<sup>140</sup> Consequently, neither the

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<sup>138</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 91.

<sup>139</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 91. The opponent can also increase the unacceptability of costs that have to be shouldered in order to end the war successfully. Among them are measures such as the wastage of the enemy's forces, the loss of territory, the causation of general damage, and finally the exhaustion of the enemy. The last measure is important for those states who have to fight against a superior opponent and use the simple duration of the fighting in order to make him realize that "... his political object will not seem worth the effort it costs" (Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 93).

<sup>140</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 91.

destruction of the enemy forces nor the seizure of his provinces is preferable to more political or indirect measures. These include "... operations that have direct *political repercussions*, that are designed in the first place to disrupt the opposing alliances, or to paralyze it, that gain us new allies, favorably affect the political scene, etc." Therefore, Clausewitz concludes, "If such operations are possible it is obvious that they can greatly improve our prospects and that they can form a much shorter route to the goal than the destruction of the opposing armies."<sup>141</sup>

Finally, Clausewitz summarizes:

"We can now see that in war many roads lead to success, and that they do not all involve the opponent's outright defeat. They range from *the destruction of the enemy's forces, the conquest of his territory, to a temporary occupation or invasion, to projects with an immediate political purpose, and finally to passively awaiting the enemy's attacks*. Any one of these may be used to overcome the enemy's will: the choice depends on circumstances."<sup>142</sup>

While ends pursued in wars are several, there is only one means: that is combat.

Clausewitz' justification of this proposition is straight forward: "... *whenever armed forces, that is armed individuals*, are used, the idea of combat must be present."<sup>143</sup>

Combat is the only effective force in war; its aim is to destroy the enemy's forces as a means to a further end. That holds good even if no actual fighting occurs, because the outcome rests on the assumption that if it came to fighting, the enemy would be destroyed. It follows that the destruction of the enemy's force underlies all military actions; all plans are ultimately based on it, resting on it like an arch on its abutment. Consequently, all action is undertaken in the belief that if the ultimate test of arms should actually occur, the outcome would be *favorable*. The decision by arms is for all major and minor operations in war what cash

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<sup>141</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>142</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 94.

<sup>143</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 95 Clausewitz warns all those who, due to philanthropist assumptions believe that "... there was some ingenious way to disarm or defeat an enemy without too much bloodshed, and might imagine this is the true goal of the art of war. Pleasant as it sounds, it is a fallacy that must be exposed: war is such a dangerous business that the mistakes which come from kindness are the very worst (Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 75).

payment is in commerce. Regardless how complex the relationship between the two parties, regardless how rarely settlements actually occur, they can never be entirely absent.<sup>144</sup>

Again, that does not imply that combat or even decisive combats occur generally. However, it is important to ensure that the enemy is not going to seek a combat for destruction:

If ... one of the two commanders is resolved to seek a decision through major battles, he will have an excellent chance of success if he is certain that his opponent is pursuing a different policy. Conversely, the commander who wishes to adopt different means can reasonably do so only if he assumes his opponent to be equally unwilling to resort to major battles.<sup>145</sup>

Consequently, politicians as well as military commanders need to “.... keep an eye on his opponent so that he does not, if the latter has taken up a sharp sword, approach him armed only with an ornamental rapier.”<sup>146</sup> By this, as Bassford argues, “Clausewitz postulated no requirement for decisive battle, demanding only an awareness of the possibility.”<sup>147</sup> In the end, the probability of success in battle is the only reliable currency to achieve the intended strategic effect.

*Proposition 7: In war, morale, psychology, and character matter.*

Criticizing those theorists who disregard morale, Clausewitz argues that “... the moral elements are among the most important in war”.<sup>148</sup> In real war, every actor within the fascinating trinity, the people, the government, the army and its commander, is connected with specific moral elements. This is, particularly, true for “*the skill of the*

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<sup>144</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 97.

<sup>145</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 98.

<sup>146</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 99; see also p. 76.

<sup>147</sup> Bassford, Christopher, *Clausewitz in English: The Reception of Clausewitz in Britain and America, 1815-1945*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 63.

*commander, the experience and courage of the troops, and their patriotic spirit*".<sup>149</sup>

These "principal moral elements" influence war and warfare. However, they are neither sufficient nor necessary. By contrast, deficits in one element can be compensated by advantages in the other.<sup>150</sup>

Definitely, the commanders of military forces – the superior commander as well as subordinated commanders - need to possess sophisticated intellectual tools, a sense of judgment, and coup d'oeil.<sup>151</sup> These requirements are necessary because of the nature of war as "action in a resistant element"<sup>152</sup>. Nevertheless, these rather intellectual capabilities are not sufficient to meet the requirements of leadership in war. Within his concept of the military genius, Clausewitz puts highest emphasis on courage, and character.<sup>153</sup> A commander is supposed to act despite the fog of war (courage) and to stick to his convictions (character). Character is so important that Clausewitz develops even a guiding principle: Against any temptations to change his mind, the commander should "... in all doubtful cases ... *stick to one's first opinion and to refuse to change unless forced to do so by a clear conviction*."<sup>154</sup>

As Aron argues,

The relation of forces, by itself alone, does not decide anything. If it were decisive by itself, the struggle of the weak against the strong would become inconceivable, absurd. Now it is strategic theory which must come to the help of the weaker.<sup>155</sup>

The experience and courage of the troops is mainly created by a series of victorious wars. In longer periods of peace, experience and courage cannot be entirely compensated through specific organization, education and training. "Discipline, skill, goodwill, a certain pride, and high morale, are the attributes of an army trained in times of peace. They command respect, but they have no strength of their own."<sup>156</sup> Therefore, compensation of this deficit by the virtue of the commander and a careful leadership must be applied.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 184.

<sup>149</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 186; see also p. 184: "The spirit and other moral qualities of an army, a general or a government, the temper of the population of the theater of war, the moral effects of victory or defeat – all these vary greatly. They can moreover influence our objective and situation in very different ways."

<sup>150</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 188-189.

<sup>151</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 102; Paret, *Clausewitz and the state*, p. 90; Clausewitz, Carl von, *Strategie aus dem Jahr 1804, mit Zusätzen von 1808 and 1809*, ed. E. Kessel, Hamburg, 1937, pp. 41-47.

<sup>152</sup> Hetzler, Hans Wilhelm, "Bewegung im erscherenden Mittel" – Handlungstheoretische Elemente bei Carl von Clausewitz. In: Gerhard Vowinckel (ed.), *Clausewitz-Kolloquium*, Berlin 1993, pp. 45-62.

<sup>153</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 102: "If the mind is to emerge unscathed from this relentless struggle with the unforeseen, two qualities are indispensable: *first, an intellect that, even in the darkest hour, retains some glimmerings of the inner light which leads to truth; and second, the courage to follow this faint light wherever it may lead*. The first of these qualities is described by the French term, *coup d'oeil*; the second is *determination*."

<sup>154</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 108.

<sup>155</sup> Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, p. 82.

<sup>156</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 189.

<sup>157</sup> "An army like this will be able to prevail only by virtue of its commander, never on its own. It must be led with more than normal caution until, after a series of victories and exertions, its inner strength will grow to fill its external panoply. We should take care never to confuse the real spirit of an



The people of war fighting states or entities can be involved morally differently. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, cabinet wars were fought without participation of the people.<sup>158</sup> The exclusion of the people had not only reduced the number of forces available but also the amount of morale of the forces. With the French Revolution,

... war again became the business of the people... The people became a participant in war; instead of governments and armies as heretofore, the full weight of the nation was thrown into the balance. The resources and efforts now available for use surpassed all conventional limits (...) There seemed no end to the resources mobilized; all limits disappeared in the vigor and enthusiasm shown by governments and their subjects.<sup>159</sup>

Additionally, the revolutionary wars serve as an example that not only rough but also civilized people might get stimulated with passion and hatred: “Even the most civilized of peoples, in short, can be fired with passionate hatred for each other.”<sup>160</sup> Nevertheless, there is a limit of passion and hatred, set by intellect of the people<sup>161</sup> and the dominance of rational political ends of the government. There is always a danger of escalation when the people get involved. Generally, in war as an act of force “the emotions cannot fail to be involved. War may not spring from them, but they will still affect it to some degree, and the extent to which they do will depend not on the level of civilization but on how important the conflicting interests are and on how long their conflict lasts.”<sup>162</sup>

*Proposition 8: Balance of power mechanism within the relationship between  
offensive and defensive*

Clausewitz argues that the defensive, finally, is the stronger form of warfare. This superiority is not the result of an ethical preference for defense or of lack of offensive spirit, but of mere calculation of the disadvantages of attack. The attack suffers, for example, from “diminishing force”, proceeding steadily towards its “culminating point”.<sup>163</sup> However, the defense, even in its mobile form with counter attacks, is restraint

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army with its mood” (Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 189).

<sup>158</sup> Hoehn, Rudolph, Scharnhorsts Vermächtnis, Frankfurt/M. and Bad Harzburg, 1972, p. 13.

<sup>159</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 592-593.

<sup>160</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 76. Clausewitz concludes: “Consequently, it would be an obvious fallacy to imagine war between civilized peoples as resulting merely from a rational act on the part of their governments and to conceive of war as gradually ridding itself of passion, so that in the end one would never really need to use the physical impact of the fighting forces – comparative figures of their strength would be enough. That would be a kind of war by algebra” (p. 76).

<sup>161</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 76: “If, then, civilized nations do not put their prisoners to death or devastate cities and countries, it is because intelligence plays a larger part in their methods of warfare and has taught them more effective ways of using force than the crude expression of instinct.”

<sup>162</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 76.

<sup>163</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 527-528.

to pursue only negative objects. Consequently, as a strategic advice, Clausewitz concludes:

If defense is the stronger form of war, yet has a negative object, it follows that it should be used only so long as weakness compels, and be abandoned as soon as we are strong to pursue a positive object. When one has used defensive measures successfully, a more favorable balance of strength is usually created; thus, the natural course in war is to begin defensively and end by attacking.<sup>164</sup>

The superiority of the defense is not only true for military operations but for the overall European balance of power. On this level Clausewitz reveals that, as Aron argues,

The tendency towards equilibrium is not enough to prevent the temporary superiority of one state over all the others; that state ends up by perishing by fault of its very success, since it ranges against itself the majority of the other members of the European republic.<sup>165</sup>

## **C. CONCLUSION**

Without a doubt, the assumption that Clausewitz is just a dreaming intellectual is untrue. By contrast, Clausewitz is a strategic mind who gathered experience in all dimensions of modern strategy. A closer look at the dimensions of modern strategy, as established by Gray<sup>166</sup>, reveals that Clausewitz not only discusses these dimensions in his theoretical writings but also worked on assignments that allowed him deep practical insights into their characteristics and interrelations.

Reflecting upon the theory of war in general and strategy in particular, Clausewitz recognizes the necessity of scientific methods that are specifically tailored to match the

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<sup>164</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 358.

<sup>165</sup> Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, p. 103.

<sup>166</sup> Gray, *Modern Strategy*, pp. 23-44.

nature of war. The proposed intellectual tools may appear rather theoretical; however, realizing from history that general principles do not meet the complexity of war, Clausewitz's way of thinking is actually the only one that can provide reasonable advice, and enables the individual to come to sensible answers on strategic questions by himself. Generally, Clausewitz's advice does not reach the level of prescription on waging specific wars and making specific strategies. Instead, as Gray argues,

The chief utility of a general theory of war and strategy lies in its ability not to point out lessons, but to isolate things that need thinking about. Theory provides insights and questions, not answers.<sup>167</sup>

Furthermore, the Prussian philosopher of war provides awareness in some fundamental insights in warfare that always should be taken account of, for example, "... that every attack loses impetus as it progresses".<sup>168</sup> Even more practically, Clausewitz provides a method of thinking that gives pragmatic advice on thinking through complex strategic challenges and organizing the strategic decision-making processes in order to come to sound results.

Among all the dimensions that cause the complexity of war and strategy, Clausewitz determines no single master dimension. People, policies and politics, and the commander and his armed forces definitely possess a strong position; and disadvantages in some dimensions might be compensated by excellent performance in others. However, in strategy making, *all* dimensions – ranging from geography to time – need to be considered in a holistic approach. Consequently, policy and strategy makers have to think independently of any general principles about the requirements of *their* wars.

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<sup>167</sup> Gray, *Modern Strategy*, p. 128.

<sup>168</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 71.

Arguing with Gray that an essential unity in strategy-making exists in all periods of history, and that the dimensions of war have been relevant in all strategic events,<sup>169</sup> Clausewitz actually becomes pragmatic to the greatest extent possible. However, the history of the Clausewitz interpretation, as described in the next chapter, reveals that, quite often, politicians, officials, and officers have not been properly understood Clausewitz's scientific methods and the multidimensionality of war and strategy; and that the evaluation of Clausewitz's person has often been far away from "First Theorist of War"<sup>170</sup>.

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<sup>169</sup> Gray, *Modern Strategy*, pp. 354-355.

<sup>170</sup> Gray, *Modern Strategy*, p. 12.

### III. CLAUSEWITZ'S IMPACT AND INTERPRETATION IN EUROPE

Since the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, war and strategy have become subject to *scientific* reasoning. The French Revolutionary Wars followed by Napoleon's almost successful military bid for European hegemony have stimulated public discussion on strategy – on the side of the defeated states with the aim, evidently, of understanding Napoleon's warfare to overcome him as soon as possible.<sup>171</sup> At that time, Clausewitz, as officer and as theorist, stood in the center of the strategic discussion.

Chapter III gives a short historical reconstruction of how strategists in Britain, France, and Germany understood Clausewitz's main propositions, contained in this study. Therein, the main emphasis is put on commonalities and diversities. Finally, some reasons for appreciating Clausewitz's main propositions in a specific, 'national way' are discussed.<sup>172</sup>

Four major commonalities of Clausewitz's interpretation in Britain, France, and Germany are detectable: first, the course of the Clausewitz interpretation was quite similar in all countries; secondly, the interpretation of Clausewitz's theoretical writings is significantly characterized by the neglect of the latter's philosophy of science that he himself regarded as the main prerequisite for properly understanding war in general, and *On War* in particular; third, the interpretation of Clausewitz was not done in a comprehensive manner but rather a selective one. Strategists used Clausewitz's authority

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<sup>171</sup> For example, the Militärische Gesellschaft in Berlin (*Denkwürdigkeiten der Militärischen Gesellschaft zu Berlin*, Reprint of the edition Berlin, 1802-1805, Osnabrück, 1985).

<sup>172</sup> The analysis is based on two different levels as provided by the theory of international relations: the international system level, and the state level. See Singer, J.D., "The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations", in *World Politics*, Volume 14, Issue 1, The International System: Theoretical Essays (Oct. 1961), pp. 77-92.

to justify their own strategic ideas instead of trying to understand him comprehensively. This is, in particular, true for the cult of the offensive that characterized the period before World War I. Lastly, most officers in France, Britain, and, ironically, Germany read Clausewitz with the aim of finding simple solutions for current or future strategic challenges.

## **A. COMMONALITY**

### **1. The Course of the Interpretation**

Clausewitz's *On War* was first published in Germany in 1832. However, in spite of some favorable reviews, the initial reception remained slow. It took more than 20 years to sell the first edition of 1,500 copies.<sup>173</sup> In Britain and France, the first translations of Clausewitz's opus magna were made available surprisingly early. In Britain, the Clausewitz reception actually started as early as in the mid-1830s<sup>174</sup>, and in France a couple of years later.<sup>175</sup> Nevertheless, as in Germany, the interest of British and French strategists in *On War* started at a low level.

In the 70's, after the German victories in the unification wars and Helmuth von Moltke's public praise of Clausewitz, the preoccupation with Clausewitz's theoretical writings changed significantly.<sup>176</sup> Moltke's remarks that Clausewitz's *On War* had been

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<sup>173</sup> Howard, Michael, "The Influence of Clausewitz", in Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Peter Paret and Michael Howard, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989, p. 27.

<sup>174</sup> Bassford, *Clausewitz in English*, pp. 35-49.

<sup>175</sup> Aron, *Clausewitz. Den Krieg denken*, p. 704.

<sup>176</sup> Moltke was the Chief of German General Staff over an exceptionally extended period of time, from 1857 until 1887; he advanced to the highest military prestige and international recognition after

essential for his self-education and leadership skills significantly promoted the interest of contemporary and upcoming officer generations.<sup>177</sup> Now, officers all over Europe started to read Clausewitz in order to gain the insights that had made Moltke's tremendous success on the battlefield possible.<sup>178</sup> Consequently, with regard to strategy, officers quite often adopted the shortcomings and failures of Moltke's Clausewitz-interpretation.

The significantly increased interest in Clausewitz's theoretical writings was, in particular, true for French officers. However, their preoccupation with Clausewitz was not so much the inclination to study the reasons of the German victories but rather to reinforce French self-esteem after the humiliating defeat in 1870/71. This was achieved by subordinating Clausewitz to Napoleon. In the French view, Clausewitz and Moltke were disciples of Napoleon but did not reach his genius.<sup>179</sup> Consequently, French officers interpreted Clausewitz through the narrow screen of the Napoleonic warfare.

During the period before World War I, not only German but also British and French strategists strived to make their national strategies consistent with Clausewitz's theory. As Bassford reveals for Britain, "Clausewitz was a significant and direct influence on British military thought in the period preceding World War I"<sup>180</sup>. With regard to France, Aron concludes, "Between 1885 and 1890 Clausewitz was part of the

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the Prussian-German army had defeated Austria and France in the campaigns of 1866 and 1870/71. See *Moltke on the Art of War*, selected writings, edited by Daniel J. Hughes, Novate: Presidio Press, 1995.

<sup>177</sup> Hahlweg, *Das Clausewitz-Bild*, pp. 64, 1299; Bassford, *Clausewitz in English*, p. 3.

<sup>178</sup> That major wars influenced the occupation with Clausewitz became again true with Britain's involvement in the South African War of 1899-1902. See Bassford, *Clausewitz in English*, pp. 69-86.

<sup>179</sup> Aron, *Clausewitz. Den Krieg denken*, p. 715. Aron argues, "Clausewitz's works became familiar in France after the defeats of 1870 and thus coincided with the rediscovery of Napoleon" (Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, p. 235).

<sup>180</sup> Bassford, *Clausewitz in English*, p. 4. By this, Bassford destroys the traditional view that Clausewitz had no meaningful influence in Britain until after World War II.

training of the officers who drew up the staff plans early in the twentieth century and led the French armies in 1914.”<sup>181</sup> Consequently, Clausewitz – in a specific, national perception - had created a decisive impact on the major European belligerent’s strategies in the Great War.

After the traumatic experience of World War I, *On War* lost popularity but, initially, remained a military classic if for no other reasons than to justify the military action of World War I<sup>182</sup> or to understand the German military model.<sup>183</sup> Now, the evaluation of Clausewitz’s theoretical works was divided. Antagonists accused him of being responsible for the manslaughter of the World Wars<sup>184</sup>; protagonists stressed his original emphasis on limited war. Finally, by the end of World War II, Clausewitz was almost completely neglected, even in Germany.<sup>185</sup>

After World War II, civilian scholars, Werner Hahlweg in Germany, Raymond Aron in France, and Michael Howard in Britain, initiated a Clausewitz-renaissance<sup>186</sup>. They revealed fakes from the original scripts and elaborated a new, more comprehensive interpretation of his theoretical works. Finally, they rediscovered Clausewitz’s importance for current and future strategy-making. The appearance of scholars in the Clausewitz-interpretation was coincident with the strong position they gained in *nuclear* strategy-making. Confronted with the uncertainties of the atomic era and the Cold War,

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<sup>181</sup> Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, p. 247. Aron argues that a Clausewitzian school existed in France, comprising Foch, Cardot and Gilbert (p. 251).

<sup>182</sup> In Germany after 1918, Clausewitz “... played prosecutor in a trial concerning the relationship of policy, statecraft, the power of the state and the general staff. There was a further trial concerning the Schlieffen Plan, and both Falkenhayn and Ludendorff called him as witness” (Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, p. 252).

<sup>183</sup> Bassford, *Clausewitz in English*, p. 122.

<sup>184</sup> See Aron’s discussion of Liddell Hart and Clausewitz, in Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, pp. 233-238.

<sup>185</sup> Hahlweg, *Das Clausewitz-Bild*, pp. 119.



European strategists, in particular in the German and French strategic communities, perceived Clausewitz's *On War* as fundamental to analyzing the European strategic environment.

To sum up, the reception of Clausewitz in Europe followed a similar pattern. The 19<sup>th</sup> century wars encouraged officers to become concerned with Clausewitz. World War I caused a decline in the Clausewitz reception that reached its peak in World War II. Since the beginning of the Cold War, the contribution of civilian scholars has been decisive for the renaissance in the reception of Clausewitz's theoretical works.

## **2. The Neglect of Philosophy of Science**

The significant disregard of any occupation with scientific methodology, even though Clausewitz emphasizes its importance so strongly<sup>187</sup>, determined the Clausewitz-interpretation in all major European countries. In Germany, it was Moltke who directed the interest in Clausewitz towards practical advice on conducting military campaigns, specifically through his definition of strategy as an "expedient"<sup>188</sup>. Then, it was one of his successor Chief of General Staff, Alfred von Schlieffen<sup>189</sup>, who, in the preface of the fifth edition of *On War*, pointed out that Clausewitz's philosophical approach did not

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<sup>186</sup> Hahlweg, *Das Clausewitz-Bild*, pp. 1331. In the US, it was Peter Paret.

<sup>187</sup> Clausewitz assessed his theoretical writings as follows: "It is not the things we have thought but the manner in which we have thought them that constitutes a great contribution to theory" (Clausewitz, Carl von, *Der Feldzug in 1812 in Russland und die Befreiungskriege von 1813-15*, Berlin, p. 264).

<sup>188</sup> *Moltke and the Art of War*, Selected Writings, ed. by Daniel J. Hughes, Novato: Presidio, 1995, pp. 47, 124.

<sup>189</sup> See Wallach, Jehuda L., "Misperceptions of Clausewitz's *On War* by the German Military", in Michael I. Handel (ed.), *Clausewitz and modern Strategy*, Kansas: Frank Cass, 1986, p. 215.

please the contemporary reader.<sup>190</sup> Some “Clausewitz-experts” even advised readers of *On War* to skip pages with philosophical content.<sup>191</sup> This was, at least, a sincere self-assessment of Hans von Seeckt, the Chief of the German Reichswehr from 1919 until 1926, when he writes: “regarding Clausewitz I am lacking the profound philosophical training; I am rather an empiricist with the talent to find sometimes a lucky formulation”.<sup>192</sup> In general, the commanders of the German military regarded the Prussian philosopher of war as a “... theoretician to be read by professors”.<sup>193</sup>

Similar statements can be found in Britain and France, also. Before Raymond Aron published his study on Clausewitz that broadly describes Clausewitz’s dialectical method, French strategic theorists had enormous difficulties understanding Clausewitz’s dialectical mode of argument. Some even accused Clausewitz of being a representative of the “German fog” or the “teutonian mystic”.<sup>194</sup> Conducting only selective readings, even France’s high ranking strategists, Foch and Gilbert, took only those strategic dimensions from Clausewitz’s theoretical work that were in line with their already developed strategic assumptions and propositions.<sup>195</sup>

The European military strategist’s occupation with history serves as an excellent example illustrating that reflection upon scientific methods had been entirely neglected. Generally, officers dealing with military history did not apply methods that met the

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<sup>190</sup> Schlieffen, Einführung zur fünften Auflage des Werkes “Vom Kriege” (Berlin 1905), quoted in Hahlweg, *Das Clausewitz-Bild*, p. 57. See also Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, p. 234.

<sup>191</sup> Hahlweg, *Das Clausewitz-Bild*, p. 57. In 1943, an *On War* edition was published by F. von Cochenhausen, titled *Vom Kriege, Um Veraltetes gekürzte Ausgabe* (Leipzig 1943).

<sup>192</sup> Quoted in Hahlweg, *Das Clausewitz-Bild*, p. 79. See also Wallach, *Misperceptions of Clausewitz’ On War by the German Military*, p. 217.

<sup>193</sup> Murray, Williamson, “Clausewitz: Some Thoughts on What the Germans Got Right”, in Michael I. Handel, (ed.), *Clausewitz and modern Strategy*, Cornwall: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1986, p. 270.

<sup>194</sup> Hahlweg, *Das Clausewitz-Bild*, pp. 135-136.

standard of the academic research. In Germany, the poor quality of the military's historic activities was revealed in the famous "strategy-dispute" between the German General Staff and its "Kriegsgeschichtliche Abteilung" on the one side, and the civilian scholar Hans Delbrück on the other side<sup>196</sup>. This dispute displayed that the historical methods applied by the German General Staff were neither compatible with the academic university standard nor with Clausewitz's *critical* method<sup>197</sup>. Occupying military history as an exclusive field of *military* research ("Generalstabswissenschaft"), the German General Staff attempted to draw military principles directly from the reconstruction of historical campaigns. For example, using Frederick the Great as historical justification, the General Staff concluded that the strategy of annihilation is the only reasonable strategy for Germany.

In disputing these assumptions and conclusions<sup>198</sup>, Delbrück referred to Clausewitz, arguing that the latter developed a bipolar strategy ("doppelpolige Strategie") that comprises annihilation *and* attrition as strategies of equal value<sup>199</sup>. Implicitly

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<sup>195</sup> Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, p. 249.

<sup>196</sup> This dispute started in 1874 and was continued even after World War I. More information is contained in Lange, Sven, *Hans Delbrück und der >Strategiestreit<*, Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach Verlag, 1995; Bucholz, Arden, *Hans Delbrück & the German Military Establishment*, Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1985; Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, pp. 70-81; Bassford, *Clausewitz in English*, pp. 177-180; Craig, Gordon A., "Delbrück: The Military Historian", in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy*, pp. 326-353; Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, pp. 336-339.

<sup>197</sup> However, evaluating Clausewitz as an historian, Paret and Moran regard him as a "... transitorial figure: a rigorous thinker who has left past preconceptions behind but has not acquired the new methodological tools that are being developed; an amateur scholar, not an academic, untouched by the nascent professionalism of the discipline of history" (Paret/Moran, *Introduction Part I*, pp. 13-14).

<sup>198</sup> Lange, *Hans Delbrück und der >Strategiestreit<*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>199</sup> Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, p. 70, explains: "war leaders have two means available, battle and maneuver; a strategy which aims resolutely and almost unconditionally towards battle heads for a single pole, whereas the strategy which combines maneuver and battle deserves to be called bipolar."

criticizing even Moltke for his incomprehensive understanding of Clausewitz's theory of war, Delbrück demanded not only a radical shift in the interpretation of Clausewitz's works<sup>200</sup> but also a significant alteration of Wilhelmine Germany's military strategy<sup>201</sup>. After several decades of discussions, Delbrück's position gained superiority, and after World War I, Delbrück's arguments were widely accepted<sup>202</sup>. In the end, the civilian scholar opened not only military history for academic research but also helped to liberate Clausewitz's theory of war from its un-dialectical understanding as a prescription for annihilation and absolute war.

In Britain and France, a dispute similar to the "strategy-dispute" did not occur. In fact, there was no need because of the closer integration of policy, military, and society. However, military strategists, like their German counterparts, conducted rather superficial historical studies that aimed to deduce prescriptive principles of warfare. With regard to Britain<sup>203</sup>, Luvaas argues,

They sought new order in history to provide a meaningful basis for their theories; they attempted to develop a reliable method for deducing scientific principles and for predicting future trends; and they endeavored to synthesize centuries of military experience in order to find signposts that modern armies had missed in the years before the war.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Lange, *Hans Delbrück und der >Strategiestreit<*, pp. 103-105.

<sup>201</sup> Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, p. 71.

<sup>202</sup> Lange, *Hans Delbrück und der >Strategiestreit<*, p. 127.

<sup>203</sup> In France, officers narrowed their historic research on the campaigns of Napoleon, in particular, and Moltke. See Porch, Douglas, "Clausewitz and the French, 1871-1914", in Handel, Michael I. (ed.), *Clausewitz and modern Strategy*, Cornwall: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1986, p. 288; Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, p. 247.

<sup>204</sup> Luvaas, *Clausewitz, Fuller and Liddell Hart*, pp. 198.

Well known is Liddell Hart's indirect approach<sup>205</sup> that he deduced from his historical studies. In fact, neither the British strategist's approach to history nor the prescription of the indirect approach would have found Clausewitz's consent. Clausewitz assessed the indirect approach as a reasonable course of action but was well aware of its limitations and prerequisites, as history showed.<sup>206</sup> Fuller was very critical, also, as Reid points out: "Though a valuable operational tool, the indirect approach cannot be employed dogmatically; under certain circumstances a direct approach is just as valuable. The indirect approach is not a cure-all ..." <sup>207</sup>. Furthermore, even contemporary British officers regarded colonial warfare as a convincing example that absolute principles like the indirect approach did not meet the reality of war.<sup>208</sup>

The Clausewitz-renaissance after World War II, initiated by civilian scholars, gave more attention to Clausewitz's philosophy of science. However, even in 1980, Hahlweg saw the necessity of highlighting the reconstruction of Clausewitz's philosophical methods which still remains an open research question.<sup>209</sup>

In the end, the neglect of Clausewitz's philosophy of science, in particular the uncritical historical approach facilitated the un-dialectical understanding of Clausewitz's *On War* that took the philosophical concept of absolute war as a general prescription of

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<sup>205</sup> Reid, *Studies in British Military Thought*, pp. 178-179. Liddell Hart hinged on a strategy of indirect approach aimed at dislocating the enemy's moral, mental, and material balance before attempting to overthrow him on the battlefield; and he used history both to illustrate and confirm his strategical theories.

<sup>206</sup> Clausewitz, *The campaign of 1812 in Russia*, p. 143; see also Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>207</sup> Reid, *Studies in British Military Thought*, p. 179.

<sup>208</sup> Bassford, *Clausewitz in English*, p. 217-218.

<sup>209</sup> Hahlweg formulated the research question as follows: "The philosophical method of 'On War', its origin, reasoning structures and foundations" (Hahlweg, *Das Clausewitz-Bild*, p. 1340). Aron describes very broadly Clausewitz's dialectical methods (Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, pp. 89-232). Recently, this writer published a reconstruction of Clausewitz's philosophy of science and outlined its

how to conduct war. Consequently, strategic theorists and commanders did not recognize or accept the limitations of war, imposed for example by policy and politics. Evidently, the neglect of philosophy of science and the determination to justify strategic plans by referring to Clausewitz's "principles" is one of the causal factors that contributed to the flawed application of strategy in World War I and World War II.

### **3. The Desire for Simplicity**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and even over long periods of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, officers all over Europe were rather inclined to be occupied with strategic theories that were easier to comprehend than Clausewitz's philosophical-theoretical approach. Desiring few principles and clear prescriptions, officers had to choose between two courses of preoccupation with strategic theory: the first course was to separate some of Clausewitz's propositions out of their context; the second course was to prefer Jomini's competitive model that intentionally concentrated on very few strategic and operational principles. Finally, as a strange synthesis of the two courses, many officers tried to understand Clausewitz's *On War* by looking through the extremely narrow screen of Jomini's strategic principles that, actually, belong to the realm of 'grand tactics'.

Jomini<sup>210</sup> was one of the first who criticized Clausewitz's style of strategic thinking: "No one could deny General von Clausewitz's great learning and fluent pen, but this pen, sometimes a little vagrant, is too pretentious, especially for a didactic discussion

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implications for the military education of future general staff officers (Hartmann, *Carl von Clausewitz. Erkenntnis, Bildung, Generalstabsausbildung*, pp. 42-132).

<sup>210</sup> Biographical data are in Abegglen, Christoph M.V., *Jomini – Einfluss seines strategischen Denkens*, pp. 2-4, available (online): <http://www.swiss-web.ch/abegglen/papers/jomini.htm>.

in which simplicity and clarity should be the foremost merits.”<sup>211</sup> On the other side, in *On War*, Jomini became the target of Clausewitz’s quite often-ironical critiques.<sup>212</sup> As a reaction to Clausewitz’s critiques, Jomini integrated some of the former’s propositions into his latest publications without, however, committing significant changes.<sup>213</sup>

Jomini considered himself as the first and only theorist who had revealed the secrets of Napoleon’s success in warfare, even “... to the point of predicting his actions with certainty”.<sup>214</sup> Explanation and prediction as purposes of scientific theory are derived from Jomini’s conviction that the complexity of war in general and of Napoleonic warfare in particular can be reduced to “invariable scientific principles”.<sup>215</sup> The main principle determines military leaders to operate with the greatest force possible in a combined effort against the decisive point of enemy forces, such as flanks or lines of operation.<sup>216</sup>

Intentionally, Jomini excludes several strategic dimensions, such as people, politics, and culture, from the theory of war and strategy. He even disconnected Napoleon’s military success from the conditions generated by the French Revolution. Until his death in 1869, the then Russian general was not willing to adjust his “invariable principles” although two social developments had apparently falsified his theory: the guerrilla warfare during the Spain and Russian campaigns where no decisive points were

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<sup>211</sup> Jomini, A. H. Baron de, *Abriß der Kriegskunst*, übersetzt, erläutert und mit Anmerkungen versehen von A. von Boguslawski, Berlin 1881, p. 13 (quoted in Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, p. 173).

<sup>212</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 135-136, 516.

<sup>213</sup> Clausewitz’s influence on Jomini is described in Shy, John, “Jomini”, in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy*, p. 172.

<sup>214</sup> Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, p. 173.

<sup>215</sup> Shy, *Jomini*, pp. 146, 152.

<sup>216</sup> Shy, *Jomini*, p. 152. To operate on interior lines and to secure the lines of operation were further

detectable on which the forces could concentrate<sup>217</sup>; and then the industrialization, which offered unprecedented opportunities for mass mobilization, weapon production, and sustained warfare.

Clausewitz's counter-arguments against the Jominian approach are evident and do not need to be reconstructed in detail. In *On War*, Clausewitz attacked the Jominian principle of numerical superiority as an "oversimplification" neglecting other factors that might influence the result of battles. On the other hand, Clausewitz agrees with Jomini on the benefits of outflanking the enemy – but only on a tactical level. Strategic outflanking requires a sufficient superiority that ensures being strong enough in one's own center of gravity. Even Napoleon, Clausewitz argues, did not commit himself to strategic outflanking although he was quite often superior in physical and moral strength.<sup>218</sup> In general, Clausewitz rejected Jomini's scientific approach; through historical evidence, he falsified main Jominian principles, at least partially<sup>219</sup>.

Ironically, Jomini became by far more popular and influential than Clausewitz. This is because Jomini satisfied expectations of officers even if they were as different as German and French officers in the outbreak of World War I. All of them appreciated Jomini's "clear, simple, and repetitive" message<sup>220</sup>, adorned with the reputation of being "scientific". Facing the increasing complexity of war, some may have been tempted by a

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invariant principles.

<sup>217</sup> Shy, *Jomini*, pp. 170-171.

<sup>218</sup> Clausewitz, Carl von, "Die wichtigsten Grundsätze des Kriegführens zur Ergänzung meines Unterrichts bei Sr. Königlichen Hoheit dem Kronprinzen", in Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, Bonn: Ferd. Dümmlers Verlag, 1991, p. 1072.

<sup>219</sup> Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, pp. 148-149; Holborn, Hajo: "The Prusso-German School: Moltke and the Rise of the General Staff", in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy*, p. 283.

<sup>220</sup> Shy, *Jomini*, pp. 163, 173.



kind of romantic desire to turn back to times when war seemed easily comprehensible. Additionally, was it not Napoleon himself who had given credit to Jomini's theory by stating that Jomini had revealed the secrets of his strategy?<sup>221</sup> In authoritarian states or societies, officers appreciated Jomini's theory because its application promised success in war regardless of political and social conditions.<sup>222</sup> Finally, as Shy points out, "soldiers managed to read even Clausewitz in ways that twisted his meaning back into the comfortable Jominian formula"<sup>223</sup>. This was in particular true for the period before World War I.

#### **4. The Cult of The Offensive**

As shown above, strategists often read Clausewitz's theoretical writings in a rather selective manner. The cult of the offensive serves as an illustrative example of how strategic fixations can narrow the understanding of multidimensional strategic theories.

In the about 25-year period before World War I, France and Germany, in particular, developed military strategies for war in Europe that were offensive.<sup>224</sup> Strategists justified the necessity of the offensive with Clausewitz's theory of war, neglecting, or even intentionally suppressing, Clausewitz's emphasis on the advantages of the defense<sup>225</sup>. However, in spite of the Europe-wide cult of the offensive prior to

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<sup>221</sup> Holborn, *The Prusso-German School: Moltke and the Rise of the General Staff*, p. 283.

<sup>222</sup> Shy, *Jomini*, p. 162.

<sup>223</sup> Shy, *Jomini*, p. 161. See also Hahlweg, *Das Clausewitz-Bild*, pp. 135-136.

<sup>224</sup> Howard, Michael, "Men against Fire: The Doctrine of the Offensive in 1914", in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy*, p. 510.

<sup>225</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 524-525.

World War I, the European nation states justified their offensive strategies somewhat differently.

Prussian-German strategy between 1866 and 1894 was well aware of the superiority of the defense, as proposed by Clausewitz.<sup>226</sup> Nevertheless, Helmuth von Moltke developed the offensive strategy of “strategic envelopment”<sup>227</sup> and practiced this strategy successfully against Austria in 1866 and against France in 1870/71. In fact, reflection upon Clausewitz’s *On War* had assisted Moltke in his strategy-making. The Prussian Field Marshall recognized the prerequisites for the successful conduct of strategic envelopments, this being superiority of its own forces and the use of defense on the tactical level. This includes that strategic envelopment, with its long exposed flanks and lines of communication, requires the non-intervention of neighboring European states. In the end, Moltke succeeded in offensive wars because he fought them with superior military means without foreign intervention.

With the prospect of two-front-wars at the beginning of the 90’s, Germany had to face a strategic dilemma. This dilemma became worse because the increasing firepower of modern weaponry definitely supported the defense. Alfred von Schlieffen’s strategic planning was an attempt to overcome this dilemma by seeking a prompt decision through an offensive battle (“Gesamtschlacht”)<sup>228</sup>. Strongly affected by the “Cannae-Battle” of

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<sup>226</sup> The significant change occurred with Schlieffen becoming Chief of General Staff in 1894.

<sup>227</sup> Rothenberg, Gunther E., “Moltke, Schlieffen, and the Doctrine of Strategic Envelopment”, in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy*, p. 297; Strachan, Hew: *European Armies and the Conduct of War*, London/New York, 1993, p. 98; Echevarria II, Antulio J., *After Clausewitz*, University Press of Kansas, 2000, p. 31. Moltke combined the strength of the defensive and offensive into a single system, the defensive-offensive.

<sup>228</sup> Rothenberg, *Moltke, Schlieffen, and the Doctrine of Strategic Envelopment*, p. 296; Geyer, Michael, “German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare, 1914-1945”, in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy*, pp. 532-534. Wallach, *Misperceptions of Clausewitz’ On War by the German Military*, p. 220 reveals, “In all his maneuvers, war games, and exercises Schlieffen had rejected every

Hannibal and Clausewitz's strategy of annihilation, Schlieffen planned a "strategic envelopment" of the opponent forces in France.<sup>229</sup> Apparently, this plan followed the example of Helmuth von Moltke the Elder.<sup>230</sup> However, Schlieffen and his successor, Moltke the Younger, did not possess the necessary amount of resources<sup>231</sup> to conduct a strategic envelopment in a two-front-war scenario with France and Russia. With the personnel strength of the French army significantly increased<sup>232</sup> and the Russian army unexpectedly modernized, Moltke the Younger's merely military adjustments of the Schlieffen-Plan were not sufficient. In the end, policy and military strategy, both failed in what Clausewitz located at the core of strategy-making: reflecting upon strategy as a "fascinating trinity"; and relating end, ways, and means.<sup>233</sup>

On the French side, the doctrine of the offensive, with Clausewitz as its celebrated main apostle, had been "... preached with evangelist fervor...".<sup>234</sup> Like Germany, the

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thought of exchanging offense for defense, even in case of tremendous inferiority." Consequently, "... Schlieffen's obsession with offensive and encirclement threw into complete oblivion all knowledge about defense" (p. 222). Recently, Echevarria argues that Schlieffen developed different plans, comprising even the strategic defense (Echevarria II, *After Clausewitz*, p.194).

<sup>229</sup> Robbins, Keith, *The First World War*, Oxford, 1984, pp. 19 - 20.

<sup>230</sup> Moltke the Elder clearly forecasted that a swift or total victory in a two-front war would not be possible (Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, p. 253).

<sup>231</sup> Rothenberg, *Moltke, Schlieffen, and the Doctrine of Strategic Envelopment*, p. 322.

<sup>232</sup> In 1913, France extended military service time from two to three years, thus increasing the personnel strength within a short period. See Keylor, *The Twentieth Century World*, p. 48; Robbins, *The First World War*, pp. 82-84; Strachan, *European Armies and the Conduct of War*, p. 109.

<sup>233</sup> The doctrine of short war through offensive was supported by several arguments. The first argument stated that a long war employing field armies of unprecedented personnel strength would cause the domestic economy, and even the entire fabric of civil society, to collapse (Strachan, *European Armies and the Conduct of War*, pp. 108, 128; Geyer, Michael, "German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare, 1914-1945", in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy*, p. 530). The second argument diagnosed a decreasing discipline and professionalism within mass armies (ibid, pp. 116-117); as a compensation, human qualities had to be encouraged, mostly through offensive spirit. Finally - this argument should not be underestimated - the wars of 1866 and 1870/71 were won through offensive.

<sup>234</sup> Porch, *Clausewitz and the French, 1871-1914*, p. 287.

French military forces planned to launch a major offensive.<sup>235</sup> However, as Porch summarizes,

... a fairly comprehensive list of points (were) overlooked by French commanders in the Great War: the need to tailor strategy to one's military strength and political goals; the superiority of the defensive, especially for the weaker side; the value of a strategy of attrition in wearing down the enemy's moral forces; the primacy of politics in the conduct of war.<sup>236</sup>

In the end, although Clausewitz gained a high reputation in Germany and France prior to World War I, it was rather principles of the Napoleonic warfare as proposed by Jomini that influenced the strategic planning on both sides.<sup>237</sup> The dominating Jominian Weltanschauung of the British, French, and German strategic minds had no capacity to question their strategic planning by understanding Clausewitz in a more comprehensive manner.

After World War I, military leaders were more susceptible to Clausewitz's appreciation of the defense. In Germany, the main reason for this susceptibility was not a new approach to strategic theory but limitations of German military forces imposed by the Versailles Peace Treaty. Now, the Reichswehr developed a concept of flexible defense that would have found Clausewitz's support. As Wallach concludes, this "... meant in fact a conscious return to Clausewitz' concept of flexible defense, a step which no German leader had dared to make during four long years of trench warfare."<sup>238</sup> With Hitler, however, the relationship between offensive and defensive changed again.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Howard, Michael, "Men Against Fire: The Cult of the Offensive in 1914", Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy*, p. 522; Robbins, *The First World War*, p. 30; Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, New York: Humanity Books, 1998, p. 240.

<sup>236</sup> Porch, *Clausewitz and the French, 1871-1914*, p. 288.

<sup>237</sup> Strachan, *European Armies and the Conduct of War*, p. 104.

<sup>238</sup> Wallach, *Misperceptions of Clausewitz' On War by the German Military*, p. 224.

<sup>239</sup> Wallach, *Misperceptions of Clausewitz' On War by the German Military*, p. 225; Geyer, *German*

Offensive warfare was necessary to achieve Hitler's political and military goals. Encouraged by the initial success in the years between 1939 and 1941<sup>240</sup>, and faced with the US entering the war of attrition against Germany, Hitler decided to attack the Soviet Union. Clausewitz would have defied this endeavor because a war against Russia must be an unlimited war conducted with only limited means. In the end, the defeat of the Wehrmacht in Russia proves the truth of Clausewitz's propositions on the offensive and the defensive.

## **B. DIVERSITY**

### **1. Primacy of Policy**

Clausewitz's proposition of "war as the continuation of policies and politics with other means" became subject to different national interpretations. In Prussia/Germany, Clausewitz's basic proposition was interpreted in a militaristic manner. By contrast, in Britain and France, countries with a firm democratic tradition, the proposition was accepted as self-evident. In the following section, the German understanding is discussed in more detail because of the catastrophes the German political-military experience caused in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In Germany, Moltke was the first major military commander publicly to reject Clausewitz's proposition on civil-military relations. The Prussian Field Marshall

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*Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare, 1914-1945*, pp. 572-594.

<sup>240</sup> Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, p. 282.

demanded that policy hand over command to the military once war had been declared.<sup>241</sup>

In the wars of 1864, 1866 and 1870/71, however, Moltke finally succumbed against Chancellor Bismarck<sup>242</sup>, although he continued to justify his point of view:

Policy uses war for the attainment of its goals; it works decisively at the beginning and the end of war, so that indeed policy reserves for itself the right to increase its demands or to be satisfied with a lesser success. In this uncertainty, strategy must always direct its endeavors toward the highest aim attainable with available means. Strategy thus works best for the goals of policy, but in its actions is fully independent of policy.<sup>243</sup>

Basically, Moltke's statement is in line with Clausewitz's dictum that politicians set the objectives of the war the military strategy has to achieve. He does not deny that politicians are interested in maintaining influence during the conduct of military operations. However, Moltke argues that, for the purpose of military success, any political influence should be abolished. What seems to be a rather pragmatic argument becomes finally a fatal reduction of national security strategy or grand strategy to military strategy. Moltke argues that, once war has been declared, the political aims are to be achieved exceptionally by using physical force. Thus, battle is crowned as the single means not only, as Clausewitz argues, for military strategy but for (national or grand) strategy as well. Furthermore, Moltke excludes all civilian expertise from the strategy-making process in war. Consequently, the Chief of the German General Staff neither built institutions for coordination and cooperation with other state ministries or civilian

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<sup>241</sup> Hahlweg, *Das Clausewitz-Bild*, pp. 64-73.

<sup>242</sup> The disputes between Bismarck and Moltke is discussed in Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, p. 207- 212; Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, pp. 241-246. Basically, Bismarck's intervention in Moltke's military strategy was to prevent a decisive disturbance of the European balance. Evidently, Bismarck, although he never cited Clausewitz in any of his publications, acted politically in accordance with Clausewitz. See Hahlweg, *Das Clausewitz-Bild*, p. 73.

<sup>243</sup> Moltke, Helmuth von, "On Strategy", in *Moltke on the Art of war*, pp. 44-45; see also Hahlweg, *Das Clausewitz-Bild*, pp. 65-73.

organizations nor educated general staff officers to cooperate with politicians and officials.

Moltke's view on the relationship between policy and military was continued until 1933. Military commanders were heavily engaged in containing political influence from the realm of war and warfare.<sup>244</sup> Confronted with mass politics, the Germany military intended to maintain a dichotomy between military and civilian society that excluded any public discourse about war and strategy.<sup>245</sup> In sharp contrast to Clausewitz's proposition, military commanders who misunderstood war as the *replacement* of policy and politics with other means became even involved in policy-making. For example, in the July crisis of 1914, the German General Staff contributed decisively to the outbreak of World War I.<sup>246</sup> Heading towards major war, Moltke the Younger, then Chief of the German General Staff, did not coordinate his action that escalated the crisis to war with the responsible politicians. With regard to the strategic war plan, "Historians have now established that the Schlieffen Plan was in fact known to the chancellors though not apparently to Admiral Tirpitz, but it was never jointly discussed by the various authorities, civil and military, whereas the French plans were studied by the supreme war council, chaired by the prime minister."<sup>247</sup> Two years later, the German General Staff, confronted with the extremely stressful military situations of stalemate and enormous consumption of human and material resources, established a

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<sup>244</sup> For example, Oberst von Scherff's statement: "Die Einmischung der Politik in die Kriegführung bleibt immer ein Verderb!" (quoted in Hahlweg, *Das Clausewitz-Bild*, p. 69).

<sup>245</sup> Geyer, Michael, "German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare, 1914-1945", in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy*, pp. 528 and 533.

<sup>246</sup> Robbins, *The First World War*, pp. 4-14.

<sup>247</sup> Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, p. 252.

“silent” military dictatorship<sup>248</sup> that protected itself against any political intervention from the outside, even from the emperor. Finally, the General Staff established the institutional preconditions for conducting total war. In 1918, after the last strategic offensives had failed, the responsible military commanders, Hindenburg and Ludendorff, blamed the politicians.<sup>249</sup> Although apparently paradoxical, this was absolutely in line with the Moltkean definition of civil-military relations.

Ludendorff, in 1922, published a book in which he criticized Clausewitz’s main proposition on the relationship between policy and war. He argued that policy only comprises foreign policy, and that all national policies have to serve the war. Later, in 1935, Ludendorff even argued that Clausewitz is not up to date any more. Now, he actually emphasizes the primacy of the military. By contrast, policy becomes a means of war. Thus, Ludendorff became the first German who actually broke with Clausewitz publicly: “All theories of Clausewitz have to be thrown overboard”.<sup>250</sup>

Hans von Seeckt, Chief of the German Reichswehr (1920-1926), highlighted the intercourse and mutual influence between policy and military. However, in real politics, von Seeckt successfully maintained the Reichswehr as an independent power, as a “state within the state”, clearly separated from the institutions of the newly established Weimarer parliamentary democracy.<sup>251</sup> In the early thirties, when confronted with the prospect of civil war, Reichswehr officers acted politically by using their personal influence on President (and former Field Marshall) Paul von Hindenburg. Finally,

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<sup>248</sup> Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, p. 300.

<sup>249</sup> Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, pp. 342-354.

<sup>250</sup> Ludendorff, Erich, *Der totale Krieg*, Munich: Ludendorffs Verlag, 1935, p. 10; quoted in Wallach, *Misperceptions of Clausewitz’ On War by the German Military*, p. 218. See also Aron, Clausewitz. *Philosopher of War*, p. 235.

<sup>251</sup> Hahlweg, *Das Clausewitz-Bild*, p. 83.



officers brought Hitler to power in 1933.<sup>252</sup> Apparently, a twofold continuity existed within the German military: first, when confronted with the danger of war or civil war, military commanders intervened politically justified by the militaristic misunderstanding of Clausewitz's dictum on war as continuation of policy. Second, officers excluded politicians and other civilians from the making of military strategies, thereby referring to Moltke's prescription that the militaristic reduction of strategy is a necessary precondition for success in war. Thus, they reduced the efficiency of the state's administration in those situations when it was most needed: that is in war.

Serving in democracies with a strong tradition of clearly defined civil-military relations, British and French strategic theorists have not given significant attention to Clausewitz's proposition of war as the continuation of policies and politics. With regard to Britain, Bassford argues,

The British never showed any propensity for rejecting Clausewitz's connection between war and politics (although it was a focus of their suspicions of Germany). They were not much interested in this aspect of *On War* in the nineteenth century, largely because – as Wellington's remarks show – they were quite aware of the connection.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> Turner, *Hitler's Thirty Days to Power*, pp. 109-162. With Hitler, a paradigmatic change in the relationship between policy and war occurred. Hitler succeeded in establishing the undoubted primacy of policy; under his totalitarian policy, the Wehrmacht became a pure instrument of policy and politics.

<sup>253</sup> Bassford, *Clausewitz in English*, p. 215. That British strategists regarded the primacy of policies important, can be illustrated by Liddell Hart's critic on Clausewitz's definition of strategy. Liddell Hart argues that Clausewitz's definition of strategy is an intrusion in "... the sphere of policy, or the higher conduct of the war, which must necessarily be the responsibility of the government and not of the military leaders it employs as its agents in the executive control of operations" (Liddell Hart, Basil H., *Strategy*, Second Revised Edition, New York / Washington: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1967, p. 333). Paradoxically, Liddell Hart praises Moltke's definition of strategy although the German Field Marshall had objected to any political influence during military campaigns.

Actually, as Strachan reveals, the British army was more engaged in pluralistic politics than expected.<sup>254</sup> The phenomenon of wartime field commanders getting involved in disputes with politicians occurred also in the British system.<sup>255</sup> And even some British officers, in line with Moltke, argued that the officer must be apolitical and that "... unfettered control brought success, political subordination failure".<sup>256</sup> Nevertheless, even in fierce disputes with politicians, officers did not fundamentally question the principle that politicians guide military strategy.

Assuming Clausewitz's major proposition as self-evident, British and French strategists did not recognize that the political conclusion of Clausewitz's dictum on the primacy of politics was not necessarily the establishment of a democratic system but the establishment of the state's administration in accordance with the "rational principles of efficiency and accountability"<sup>257</sup>. Britain, being a parliamentary monarchy and the centerpiece of an empire, possessed decision-making institutions that definitely reflected the complexity of strategy. In France, by contrast, political crises and internal weakness limited the state's efficiency and accountability, with severe impacts on strategy making.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army*, pp. 8-10. In the colonies, in particular, officers became used to acting as politicians. Generally, Britain accepted the establishment of different political institutions in the colonies. As Strachan argues, although the "government by the army may have been deemed unconstitutional with Britain, ... Britain saw nothing bizarre in imposing military government elsewhere" (p. 76).

<sup>255</sup> Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army*, p. 102.

<sup>256</sup> Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army*, p. 4. See also Michael Geyer who detected tendencies of autonomy of the military and elite strategy-making that are characteristic for the German model, also in Britain and France (Geyer, Michael, "German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare, 1914-1945", in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy*, p. 542).

<sup>257</sup> Paret/Moran, *Part Two: Introduction*, p. 231.

<sup>258</sup> Porch, *Clausewitz and the French, 1871-1914*, pp. 299-301.

## 2. Alternative Strategic Concepts

After the defeat of Napoleon, Europe was characterized by the “Pax Britannica” that was based on the British virtual monopoly among European powers of overseas colonies, and the virtual monopoly of world-wide naval power. Later, the Crimean War in 1856, and, at the end of the century, the German threat showed the limitations of a strategy that was mainly focused on naval supremacy. During World War I, establishing a stalemate in the North Sea, Britain became involved in continental warfare in a way it was not prepared for.<sup>259</sup> In order to avoid a repetition of the catastrophe of the Great War, British strategists sought to develop a *new* model of strategic theory. They intended to create an alternative to, what they assumed was, the continental model that so far had dominated the strategic culture and the actual fighting of war in Europe. This attempt is closely connected with the names of Fuller and Liddell Hart. However, in spite of their well-known and quite often devastating critiques imposed on Clausewitz<sup>260</sup>, Fuller and Liddell Hart are astonishingly in line with Clausewitz’s main propositions. Paradoxically, Liddell Hart<sup>261</sup> and, in particular, Fuller would have supported main theoretical propositions of the Prussian philosopher of war if they had appropriately interpreted them. Without a doubt, their scientific approach in developing a theory of war and

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<sup>259</sup> Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, pp. 150-265.

<sup>260</sup> The crushing critiques are summarized in Luvaas, Jay, “Clausewitz, Fuller and Liddell Hart”, in Michael I. Handel (ed.), *Clausewitz and modern Strategy*, pp. 201, 206, 208-209; Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, pp. 203-238. One example is Fuller’s conclusion, “Of all Clausewitz’ blind shots ..., the blindest was that he had ‘never grasped that the true aim of war is peace and not victory; therefore that peace should be the ruling idea of policy, and victory only the means toward its achievements” (quoted in Luvaas, *Clausewitz, Fuller and Liddell Hart*, p. 206).

<sup>261</sup> As Luvaas argues, Liddell Hart was more in the tradition of Jomini (except the evaluation of Napoleon whom Liddell Hart was critical of). Both were prescriptive and developed eternal formula (numerical superiority at decisive points; indirect approach) in a repetitive, thereby lucid manner. See Luvaas, *Clausewitz, Fuller and Liddell Hart*, p. 207.

strategy was different from Clausewitz's. However, nearly all of Fuller's and Liddell Hart's strategic propositions and principles are anticipated in Clausewitz's *On War* but in a more comprehensively reflective manner. In the following, main propositions of the Prussian and the British strategists are discussed comparatively.

First of all, both British strategists, like Clausewitz, recognized that war is a social phenomenon. As Reid argues, "Fuller and Liddell Hart were to pioneer in Britain ... the technique of studying warfare in the round as a social phenomenon".<sup>262</sup> Fuller, who already considers the impact of mass democracy on strategy<sup>263</sup>, writes: "I have shown that the forces of war and those of life generally are synonymous".<sup>264</sup> From this point of view, Fuller comes to the same conclusions that Clausewitz has drawn a century before: "Warfare to be a sane political instrument demands a sane political end, and to be attainable that end must be strategically possible"<sup>265</sup>. As shown above, the primacy of policy was a relatively unquestioned principle in Britain, in practice as well as in theory. Liddell Hart states clearly, "The military objective is only the means to a political end." Also his conclusions are absolutely in line with Clausewitz's position: "Hence the military objective should be governed by the political objective, subject to the basic condition that policy does not demand what is militarily – that, is practically, impossible."<sup>266</sup> Furthermore, as Fuller argues, strategists are not only to reflect national policies but must also be integrated in the national decision-making processes. Like Clausewitz, Fuller draws the institutional consequence that the commander of the army

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<sup>262</sup> Reid, *Studies in British Military Thought*, p. 171

<sup>263</sup> Luvaas, *Clausewitz, Fuller and Liddell Hart*, p. 204-205.

<sup>264</sup> Fuller, *The Foundations of the Science of War*, London: Hutchinson & Co., 1926, p. 195.

<sup>265</sup> Quoted in Reid, *Studies in British Military Thought*, p. 113.

should be a long-standing member of the government in order to assure that strategy marches in close step with policy and politics<sup>267</sup>. In the end, Liddell Hart and Fuller understand war as the Clausewitzian “fascinating trinity” and have drawn the same institutional conclusions as the Prussian philosopher of war.

Secondly, both, Fuller and Liddell Hart, highlight that peace is the ultimate aim of war. The former argues that war has a creative purpose, “... which is to create a better state of conditions, and not merely to destroy an existing discontent”<sup>268</sup>. The creation of a better state of conditions does not necessarily imply the destruction of the enemy forces. By contrast, “The idea that an enemy must be destroyed is only legitimate when it leads to a profitable state of peacefulness.”<sup>269</sup> Generally, Liddell Hart is in line with Fuller’s argument. Nevertheless, based on his differentiation between grand strategy and military strategy, Liddell Hart transferred the aim of peace into the realm of grand strategy.<sup>270</sup> He argues,

... while the horizon of strategy is bounded by war, grand strategy looks beyond the war to the subsequent peace. It should not only combine the various instruments, but also regulate their use as to avoid damage to the future state of peace – for its security and prosperity.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, p. 351.

<sup>267</sup> Luvaas, *Clausewitz, Fuller and Liddell Hart*, pp. 200.

<sup>268</sup> Fuller, J.F.C., *The Second World War, 1939-45: A Strategical and Tactical History*, New York: Meredith Press, 1968, p. 348.

<sup>269</sup> Fuller, J.F.C., *Lectures on FSR III (Operations between Mechanized Forces)*, London: Sifton Praed, 1932, pp. 37-38, quoted in Reid, *Studies in British Military Thought*, p. 97.

<sup>270</sup> As Aron argues, Clausewitz would not have agreed to this separation (Aron, *Clausewitz. Den Krieg denken*, p. 692).

<sup>271</sup> Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, p. 336. See also p. 362.

Liddell Hart, in particular, criticizes Clausewitz for disregarding the aim of peace in military strategic thinking and for too strongly emphasizing the tactical victory and the destruction the enemy forces:

The object in war is to attain a better peace – even if only from your own point of view. Hence it is essential to conduct war with constant regard to the peace you desire. This is the truth underlying Clausewitz’s definition of war as a ‘continuation of policy by other means’ – the prolongation of that policy through the war into the subsequent peace must always be borne in mind. A State which expends its strength to the point of exhaustion bankrupts its own policy, and future.<sup>272</sup>

However, Liddell Hart’s critique of Clausewitz is positively not justified. In contrast to Liddell Hart’s critique, Clausewitz argued that the political conception of peace should determine military strategy permanently.<sup>273</sup> Clausewitz’s holistic approach, in particular the application of hermeneutics and dialectics, connects war and peace very closely.<sup>274</sup> Thus, Clausewitz anchors the idea of peace not only in the realm of grand strategy but also plants it deeply into the mind of the military strategist.

A second main thrust of Liddell Hart’s critique towards Clausewitz is directed against the latter’s proposition that battle is the single means in war. First, Liddell Hart argues that battles must be avoided to the greatest extent possible because they also weaken the victors of battles. Secondly, the British Captain points out that (grand) strategy possesses several different means, military and non-military: “Just as the military means is only one of the means to the end of grand strategy – one of the instruments in the surgeon’s case – so battle is only one of the means to the end of strategy.”<sup>275</sup> If,

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<sup>272</sup> Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, p. 366.

<sup>273</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 90-92, 143,

<sup>274</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 583-584.

<sup>275</sup> Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, p. 338.

nevertheless, battle proofs necessary, then “... the aim of strategy must be to bring about this battle under the most advantageous circumstances. (...) The perfection of strategy would be, therefore, to produce a decision without any serious fighting”<sup>276</sup>. Thus, Liddell Hart advocates bloodless victories as the ultimate goal of strategy.

Finally, Liddell Hart condenses his arguments in the principle that the true aim of the strategist “... *is not so much to seek battle as to seek a strategic situation so advantageous that if it does not of itself produce the decision, its continuation by a battle is sure to achieve this.*”<sup>277</sup> Again, this is generally in line with Clausewitz’s arguments although the latter clearly states that in war only a single means is available, and that is battle. By emphasizing battles as the single means of strategy, Clausewitz rejected the contemporary opinion of “kind-hearted people ... that there was some ingenious way to disarm or defeat an enemy without too much bloodshed...” and that “... this is the true goal of the art of war”<sup>278</sup>. Instead, Clausewitz increases awareness of the possibility of battles in wars; every party must be prepared if the adversary actually seeks battle. But, definitely, Clausewitz does not prescribe to go for battle.

Liddell Hart’s demand for “... *sound calculation and co-ordination of the end and the means*”<sup>279</sup> as an elementary prerequisite for success in war is, again, absolutely in line with Clausewitz. Viewing his Prussian counterpart as the apostle of unlimited war, Liddell Hart emphasizes limited military aims, relying on the strategic factor of time and on a rather indirect approach:

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<sup>276</sup> Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, p. 338.

<sup>277</sup> Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, p. 339.

<sup>278</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 75.

<sup>279</sup> Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, p. 336

When a government appreciates that the enemy has the military superiority, either in general or in a particular theatre, it may wisely enjoin a strategy of limited aim. It may desire to wait until the balance of force can be changed by the intervention of allies or by the transfer of forces from another theatre. It may desire to wait, or even to limit its military effort permanently, while economic or naval action decides the issue.<sup>280</sup>

Again, Clausewitz has integrated these arguments into his theory of war and strategy.<sup>281</sup> However, he would have pointed out that other dimensions of war may compensate military inferiority, that “waiting” does not necessarily increase its own military capacities, and that the indirect approach depends on conditions that are not always given<sup>282</sup>.

Like Clausewitz, Fuller and Liddell Hart reflect upon uncertainty as a major element of war. Liddell Hart argues that the main causation of the war’s uncertainty lies in his nature as a “two-party affair” that comprises a *thinking* adversary. Nevertheless, while Clausewitz draw some elementary conclusions about the nature of war in general and the importance of the military genius in particular, Liddell Hart remains more on the level of utilitarian prescription. However, even Liddell Hart’s insights can be traced back to Clausewitz’s *On War*: for example, that the commander has to take advantage of unexpected situations; that alternative objectives and plans have to be developed to gain flexibility; and that surprise and rear attacks can demoralize the front.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, p. 334. During World War I, the indirect approach was also practiced by the German Supreme Command under Falkenhayn in 1916 (Geyer, Michael, “German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare, 1914-1945”, in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy*, pp. 534-535).

<sup>281</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>282</sup> See, for example, Clausewitz, *The Campaign of 1812 in Russia*, p. 143.

<sup>283</sup> Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, pp. 343, 350; Reid, *Studies in British Military Thought*, p. 116.



Several further common propositions can be detected between Fuller and Liddell Hart on the one side, and Clausewitz on the other side.<sup>284</sup> In the end, the comparison of some main propositions shows a significant consensus in important elements of strategic theory between the Prussian and the two British strategists, although the latter intended to develop an alternative, anti-continental strategic theory. However, Fuller's and, in particular, Liddell Hart's misinterpretation of Clausewitz darkened this fundamental consensus. As Bassford summarizes, "Particularly damaging were Liddell Hart's unreasonable attacks, which left a generation of military commentators confused about the relationship between the philosopher's theories and those of his alleged 'misinterpreters'".<sup>285</sup> Clausewitz became a victim of the British theorist's intention to create of strategy that is different from the continental model. His name was closely linked with the continental model of strategy that completely failed in World War I. Consequently, Fuller and Liddell Hart confounded Clausewitz's theory of war and strategy with the implemented strategy in World War I. Even the correction of Liddell Hart's Clausewitz interpretation by German expatriates<sup>286</sup> and by scholars, in particular Michael Eliot Howard, were not sufficient to destroy the British tradition of trashing Clausewitz. The British historian John Keegan provides an excellent example of the continuation of Liddell Hart's wrong but effective Clausewitz interpretation.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Like the required qualities for strategists. See Luvaas, *Clausewitz, Fuller and Liddell Hart*, p. 203.

<sup>285</sup> Bassford, *Clausewitz in English*, p. 5.

<sup>286</sup> Bassford, *Clausewitz in English*, pp. 180-190.

<sup>287</sup> Bassford, Christopher, John Keegan and the Grand Tradition of Trashing Clausewitz, available

## C. ANALYSIS

The following analysis of the Clausewitz interpretation is focused on the question of *why* British, French, and German strategic theorists understood him in a specific, national way. On the international and state levels of analysis, several reasons can be identified.

### 1. International Level

The international systems level provides some impressive explanations for the misinterpretation of Clausewitz's proposition, (1) in particular for the German militaristic misinterpretation of the supremacy of policy, (2) for the primacy of the offensive that astonishes, in particular, in the case of France in World War I, and (3) for the alternative British way of warfare.

(1) The security situation of Germany, located in the heart of Europe, contributed decisively to the misinterpretation of Clausewitz's proposition of war as the continuation of policies and politics with other means. As described above, the German unification wars accelerated the military's preoccupation with Clausewitz's *On War*. The mindset that guided this preoccupation was absolutely influenced by the German security situation. The united Germany had changed the traditional European balance of power that was based on strong flanks and a weak center.<sup>288</sup> Germany perceived itself as a state

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(online): <http://www.clausewitz.com/CWZHOME/Keegan/KEEGWHOL.htm> (June 2000).

<sup>288</sup> Craig, Gordon A., George, Alexander L., *Force and Statecraft*, New York/Oxford: Oxford

that, like Prussia, was surrounded by potentially opponent states that might even built alliances in order to confront it with multi-front-wars. Consequently, the political-military elites sought to continue what had been the traditional policy of the Prussian state: the making of the Prussian state was essentially based on war making or at least on constant preparation for war-making.

Similar, the political-military elite expected Germany to survive only if it was established as a 'garrison state' ("Militärstaat") with the officer corps as social elite ("staatstragende Schicht"). Thus, a political culture became dominant fostering not civil society but militarism, and stimulating military intervention into politics, in particular in situations when the survival of the state was perceived as externally or internally threatened.

To conclude, Germany proved the strong correlation between the security situations, the political culture of the state, and the military intervention into politics.<sup>289</sup> The more the state's security is threatened, and the less state and society are tied to a democratic culture, the more likely the military dominates policies and politics. If even the survival of the state is in danger, the military establishes a strong bureaucratic position that reinforces its ability to intervene politically. Consequently, the perceived security situation allowed the German political-military elite to understand Clausewitz's proposition of war as continuation of policies and politics in two ways: first, the political and military elite regards Clausewitz's proposition as irrelevant to the specific German

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University Press, 1995, p. 25-42.

<sup>289</sup> Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army*, pp. 13 and 19.

case; or secondly, the elite – intentionally – “amends” the proposition, and turns it into the opposite.<sup>290</sup>

(2) In World War I, Britain, France, and Germany developed and implemented offensive strategies. This predisposition appears to be quite paradoxical, because the new military technology favored the defense, in particular on the tactical level. However, struggling with the proper integration of modern technologies in strategy, operation, and tactics, all main belligerent states agreed on the primacy of the offensive, thereby being well aware of the likelihood of heavy losses<sup>291</sup>. Echevarria II points out that this agreement was not an irrational decision. “Contrary to conventional wisdom, the theories developed during this time did not dismiss the importance of firepower merely to retreat into a blind faith in the primacy of psychological factors and an atavistic cult of the offensive.”<sup>292</sup> Instead, reasons can be traced back to the desire to reduce complexity, to contain the impact of pacifism and socialism, and to meet the requirements of the globalized economy.

First, the impact of industrialization and modern technology in warfare caused a crisis of tactics that dominated the institutional and individual intellectual capacities. Therefore, reduction of complexity was sought and, finally found, in the emphatic

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<sup>290</sup> The different editions are discussed in Hahlweg, *Das Clausewitz-Bild*, pp. 167-172.

<sup>291</sup> Howard, Michael, “Men against Fire: The Doctrine of the Offensive in 1914”, in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy*, pp. 522 and 526.

<sup>292</sup> Echevarria II, *After Clausewitz*, p. 105. Drawing the lessons learned from World War I, the western European nations developed more defensive strategies. The German military, by contrast, stuck to the theory of the offensive. This was justified by the self-perception of being undefeated in the field. Consequently, German strategist did not perceive the theory and practice of offensives as discredited. Paradoxically, as a German general argued, “The maxims of ‘On War’, above all the annihilation idea considered as the nature of war, became the spiritual equipment that constituted the superiority of our leadership in the last great war” (Generalmajor a.D. von Schikfus and Neudorff, Clausewitz, in F. von Cochenhausen (ed.), *Führertum*, Berlin: Mittler, 1937, p. 346; quoted in Wallach, *Misperceptions of Clausewitz’ On War by the German Military*, p. 217).

accentuation of the annihilation idea.<sup>293</sup> Officers perceived the offensive as the single strategic tool to meet the technical revolution in military affairs.

Secondly, the traditional warrior spirit of armies appeared to be threatened by an international phenomenon: this was the Europe-wide increasing political influence of pacifism and socialism. Not only Germany but also Britain and France launched several activities against these perceived threats<sup>294</sup>, among them the ideology of the offensive.

Furthermore, military commanders assessed neither the people nor the economic system as reliable to sustain long lasting wars.<sup>295</sup> Facing all these restraints, military commanders focused their reading of *On War* on Clausewitz's elaboration on the offensive, without reflecting upon its disadvantages and Clausewitz's general preference of the defense.

The military commander's decision for offensive strategies is astonishing in particular in the case of France. Since 1871, with Germany's relative power in Europe rising, France recognized its increasing numerical inferiority.<sup>296</sup> Unfortunately, no reliable allies, neither Russia nor Britain, were available in the aftermath of this humiliating defeat. Additionally, the internal political situation in France remained characterized by political disunity. Consequently, the strategic challenge for French

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<sup>293</sup> Schlieffen perceived the ideal of annihilation as the gauge of Clausewitz's *On War* and expressed this in the introduction of the 5<sup>th</sup> edition: "... the permanent merit of the work 'On War' lies ... in its emphatic accentuation of the annihilation idea" (quoted in Wallach, *Misperceptions of Clausewitz' On War by the German Military*, p. 215).

<sup>294</sup> Action comprised the support of specific literature and the creation of youth organization (Echevarria II, *After Clausewitz*, p. 115).

<sup>295</sup> In the Fin de siècle, all major European countries realized that major war would be long and that war would threaten the economic and social basis. As Jan Bogomil Bloch has argued in *The Future of War in Its Technical, Economic, and Political Aspects*, modern war would quickly bankrupt European states and place such a strain on its societies that revolution would follow. For further discussion see Echevarria II, *After Clausewitz*, pp. 85-93.

strategists was how to compensate the German numerical superiority. Ironically, Clausewitz seems to have the answer French strategists were looking for: that morale can compensate numerical inferiority. Actually, it is one of Clausewitz's main insights that military strength is a product of weapons *and* will. And morale, as Clausewitz reveals from military history, can be initiated and maintained through offensive action.

Therefore, as Porch argues, "To an army in such a state of political confusion and material disarray, a doctrine which preached the superiority of 'moral force' was naturally attractive."<sup>297</sup> If all other factors were equal, superiority within the moral dimension would prove decisive.<sup>298</sup> In the end, inferiority in the European balance of power and the bad conditions of the French state drove French strategic theorists to find the solution in offensive military action and to find the theoretical justification in Clausewitz who was assumed as one of "Napoleon's disciples".

(3) The "splendid isolation" has enabled Britain to choose a strategic concept that is different to those of the continental European states. Britain could afford to rely on naval supremacy, although sea power had only limited relevance for war on the European continent.<sup>299</sup> Maintaining only small land forces, Britain followed a sound balance-of-power policy. As Fuller argues,

As long as our command of the sea was maintained, invasion was impossible, yet this very command meant that our land forces must remain weak, not only because the people ... saw no necessity for a large army, but because, had we added such an army to our all-powerful fleet, we

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<sup>296</sup> Porch, *Clausewitz and the French, 1871-1914*, p. 294.

<sup>297</sup> Porch, *Clausewitz and the French, 1871-1914*, p. 296.

<sup>298</sup> Echevarria II, *After Clausewitz*, p. 125; Porch, *Clausewitz and the French, 1871-1914*, p. 288.

<sup>299</sup> Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, pp. 133-134, 146-147, 201-202.

should have threatened the existence of every Continental nation, and ... forced them to enter into coalition against us.<sup>300</sup>

In order to maintain naval supremacy and prevent invasion, Britain pursued a strategy that is characterized by the following elements: first, in crisis situations and in war, Britain must have continental allies if only to land army contingents on the European continent; secondly, the protection of Belgium and the Netherlands is of utmost importance to land an army and to prevent enemy landings; third, Britain could not allow any great powers to seize command of the sea while they simultaneously gained dominion on land; fourth, an imbalance of power between France and Germany should be avoided<sup>301</sup>.

These considerations put specific emphasis on the strategic level of military operations before thinking about the operational and tactical implementation. This might have made British strategists more sensitive to Clausewitz's strategic deliberations than the continental European strategists. As Murray argues, "It is not surprising that Anglo-Americans, who must think first of getting to the battlefield, should concentrate on the strategic and political level of *On War*, while the Prussians and their successors, the Germans, with immediate vulnerabilities on land would gravitate to Clausewitz's thoughts in the operational and tactical sphere."<sup>302</sup>

In the end, Fuller's and Liddell Hart's rejection of the centrality of battle "... may result from the fact that British military operations – owing to the maritime form of

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<sup>300</sup> Fuller to D'Eyncourt, 7 May 1920, D'Eyncourt Paper DEY 22, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, quoted in Reid, *Studies in British Military Thought*, p. 99.

<sup>301</sup> Reid, *Studies in British Military Thought*, pp. 103-6. "Thus, a policy that did not sustain France would bring about a domination of the Low Countries by Germany and the threat of a submarine and aerial blockade that was so detrimental to British security" (p. 106)

British power projection, the nature of the coalition warfare in which Britain was usually involved, the salient economic elements thereof, and the scarcity of British military manpower – almost always emphasized delay and attrition over offensive combat.”<sup>303</sup> Furthermore, because of its splendid isolation, the naval supremacy, and the superior economic resources of the British Empire, Britain could take advantage of “time” as a main strategic dimension.

All these strategic advantages Britain possessed were not valid for France and Germany. These two countries were forced to rely on land forces and fast operations against the decisive points of the enemy. Britain, by contrast, could choose a secondary area of operations in which small land forces, avoiding battle or at least fighting battles under favorable conditions, could gain disproportional military influence.<sup>304</sup> Because of Britain’s strategically splendid location in terms of geopolitics and favorable position in terms of balance-of-power policies, British strategists assessed Clausewitz’s theoretical works rather as a reflection of the continental warfare. However, as previously shown, Clausewitz’s theory of war and strategy can be easily applied to Britain’s strategic specifications. In fact, *On War* discusses several dimensions and elements that British strategists emphasized as the British way of warfare but in a more comprehensive manner.

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<sup>302</sup> Murray, *Clausewitz: Some Thoughts on What the Germans Got Right*, p. 271.

<sup>303</sup> Bassford, *Clausewitz in English*, pp. 63-64. See also Hahlweg, *Das Clausewitz-Bild*, p. 139.

<sup>304</sup> Aron, *Clausewitz. Den Krieg verstehen*, p. 696.



## **2. State Level**

The state level analysis provides some instructive explanations for the misinterpretation of Clausewitz's proposition, (1) in particular for Germany's militaristic misinterpretation of the supremacy of policy, (2) for the neglect of philosophy of science; (3) for the French emphasis of the offensive; and (4) for the lack of strategic minds.

(1) The German military victories between 1864 and 1871 and the unification of Germany led to the glorification of the officer corps by large groups within German society. The officer corps as the highest representation of German nationalism now attracted even liberals, who had struggled against the political restoration in the first half of the 19th century. The officer corps regarded all other social groups as enemies of the state ("staatsgefährdend") not supporting German nationalism. The German military, realizing that the people have decisive influence on the military power of a nation state, became concerned about the impact of the increasing liberal and social democratic political movements on strategy-making. They reacted in a threefold manner: first, by concentrating on annihilation because the populace was not supposed to support long-lasting wars; second, by trying to separate these groups from any participation in the strategic decision-making process; and third, by influencing the political opinions of the population, in particular by trying to restrict the youth from liberal and social democratic opinions.

By doing this, the Wilhelmine military system recognized Clausewitz's "fascinating trinity" but tried to maintain the dominance of the commander and the army in the interrelationship with the government and the people. For this purpose, Clausewitz

needed to be interpreted in a way that was not reconcilable with his original insights. Comparing the alteration of the text regarding the relationship between policy and war with the text passages dealing with the defense, Wallach concludes, "... it is obvious that they could not tolerate the idea of the political agency dominating war, and wished to discourage any discussion of his particular subject."<sup>305</sup> Consequently, the German military elite prevented any attempt to find institutional regulations in the realm of strategy-making that involved political expertise: "... contrary to the established practice in other countries, the Germans never established an institution where statesmen and generals together discussed war policy."<sup>306</sup>

(2) The disregard of Clausewitz's philosophy of science was predominately caused by the qualifications of the officer corps. In general, the education of officers in all European countries was not sufficient to reach the quality Clausewitz assumed required for military leaders, at least in general staff assignments. In Germany, this was true mainly for two reasons. First of all, the Prussian-German army struggled to introduce the highest school-leaving examination at secondary schools ("Abitur") as a mandatory prerequisite for the officer commission.<sup>307</sup> Secondly, military education became increasingly focused on craftsman-like conceptions offering practical guide – a kind of 'do' and 'do not' - for the conduct of war.<sup>308</sup> Consequently, military education became focused on operational and tactical skills, while strategy fell between the cracks.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> Wallach, *Misperceptions of Clausewitz' On War by the German Military*, p. 228; Geyer, *German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare, 1914-1945*, p. 528.

<sup>306</sup> Wallach, *Misperceptions of Clausewitz' On War by the German Military*, p. 229.

<sup>307</sup> Demeter, Karl, *Das Deutsche Offizierkorps in Gesellschaft und Staat 1650-1945*, Frankfurt/M. 1962, p. 82.

<sup>308</sup> Wallach, *Misperceptions of Clausewitz' On War by the German Military*, p. 214.

<sup>309</sup> Murray, *Clausewitz: Some Thoughts on What the Germans Got Right*, p. 271.

This is also true for policies and politics as subject in military curricula. Instead of enhancing political education to understand the modernization process, the German military established the idealtyp of the apolitical soldier, as exemplified by Schlieffen<sup>310</sup>. The peak of this development was reached in the German Wehrmacht, particularly during World War II.<sup>311</sup> As a result of this long-lasting development, German general staff officers did not possess the intellectual tools neither to reflect upon strategy nor to understand Clausewitz's *On War*.

A second important reason that caused the neglect and misunderstanding of Clausewitz's philosophy of science is tied to the different scientific cultures, in particular between Britain and Germany. In general, the scientific culture in Germany is characterized by a higher relevance of philosophical-theoretical reflections. In Britain, by contrast, empiricism and pragmatism were preferred.

Until the 60's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when a realistic turn in social sciences was conducted in Germany, philosophical reflection ("Geisteswissenschaften") dominated the scientific discourse.<sup>312</sup> However, since the German military excluded academic discourse from military matters, the philosophical culture in Germany could not contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of Clausewitz' philosophy of war among officers. Even Moltke the Younger, although interested in philosophy, and Walther Reinhardt,

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<sup>310</sup> Wallach, *Misperceptions of Clausewitz' On War by the German Military*, p. 229.

<sup>311</sup> A short history of the disregard of Clausewitz among high-ranking German generals is in Wallach, *Misperceptions of Clausewitz' On War by the German Military*, pp. 214-218. As early as 1873, the *Militär-Wochenblatt* found a sound explanation for this development: "This purely craftsman-like conception, so widely spread in the Army, is the reciprocal consequence of Clausewitz's ingenious work of destruction, the mighty deeds of the last years and the material direction of the present time" (quoted in Hahlweg, *Das Clausewitz-Bild*, p. 57; translated in Wallach, *Misperceptions of Clausewitz' On War by the German Military*, p. 214).

<sup>312</sup> Hartmann, Uwe, *Erziehungswissenschaft und Objektivität*, Bad Heilbrunn 1987.

although a reformer of the officer education in the Reichswehr<sup>313</sup>, neglected Clausewitz and followed Schlieffen's more practical approach to strategic theory.

The British way of strategic thinking is, by contrast, supposed to be rather pragmatic.<sup>314</sup> Bassford confirms this view by stating, "It is true that theory was always suspect in British eyes..."<sup>315</sup> Seen through this tradition, Clausewitz was assessed as a strategic theorist who "... had acquired a philosophical mode of expression without developing a truly philosophical mind"<sup>316</sup>. In spite of this critique, a major commonality in the theoretical approach to strategy existed between Fuller and Clausewitz. Both wrote books to teach officers how to think through military problems.<sup>317</sup> However, Clausewitz's and Fuller's approach in this common endeavor was different: While Clausewitz was pragmatic in the sense of providing a theory for self-education, Fuller provided not only scientific explanations and prediction but also concrete principles for direct action. As Luvaas summarizes,

Clausewitz had developed theory to provide the framework for a serious study of wars and campaigns; Fuller wanted to develop a scientific method of analysis that would improve the army's efficiency by imparting useful knowledge. To Clausewitz theory should be study, not doctrine, its role was to guide the *commander* in his self-education. To Fuller it was imperative to study war with methods of science so that the conditions of the next conflict might be accurately forecast.<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> Gablik, Axel, "Walther Reinhardt", in Detlef Bald, Uwe Hartmann, Claus von Rosen (ed.), *Klassiker der Pädagogik im deutschen Militär*, Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag, 1999, pp. 147-163; Wallach, *Misperceptions of Clausewitz' On War by the German Military*, pp. 217-218.

<sup>314</sup> Bassford, *Clausewitz in English*, p. 217 gives some reasons for concrete mindedness.

<sup>315</sup> Bassford, *Clausewitz in English*, p. 105.

<sup>316</sup> Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, p. 352.

<sup>317</sup> This is Fuller's book *The Foundations of the Science of War*, first published in 1926. However, Fuller ignored Clausewitz on this subject. See Luvaas, *Clausewitz, Fuller and Liddell Hart*, pp. 201-202.

<sup>318</sup> Luvaas, *Clausewitz, Fuller and Liddell Hart*, pp. 203. See Fuller, *The Foundations of the Science of War*, pp. 20-23, 37-41.

In the end, a different understanding of pragmatic theory contributed to Fuller's misunderstanding and depreciation of Clausewitz's *On War*.<sup>319</sup>

The difference between Clausewitz's rather philosophical approach and the British strive for empirical laws is reflected in the understanding of strategic theory as a science or rather an art.<sup>320</sup> Basically, Fuller, Liddell Hart, and Clausewitz criticized the strategic concepts of Bülow or Jomini. All refused to treat strategy purely quantitatively or geometrically or as a matter of concentrating superior force<sup>321</sup>. In the end, while Fuller connected strategy to the empirical sciences prevailing in Britain, Clausewitz invented his own science for the realm of strategy, connected to the contemporary philosophical discussion and in line with the "Geisteswissenschaften" to be developed nearly 100 years later.

(3) The French emphasis of the offensive in World War I, as mentioned above, was caused by a deep-seated inferiority complex against its eastern neighbor. In the French perception, the inferiority was not only caused by the lower number of soldiers and weapons but also by France's political discord and bureaucratic confusion. Encountering the inferior condition of the French state and society, strategists assessed the

... Clausewitzian 'moral force' ... (as) an excellent cure for all the ills which afflicted the French army – political divisions, deficiencies in

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<sup>319</sup> In the end, both, Fuller and Clausewitz, did not find great success with their intention to provide intellectual tools to think through military problems.

<sup>320</sup> Fuller, J.F.C., *The Reformation of War*, London: Hutchinson & Co., 1932, p. 25; Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, pp. 335-337.

<sup>321</sup> Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, p. 342.

armament. (...) ‘Moral force’ united left and right, Dreyfusard and anti-Dreyfusard, colonial and metropolitan.<sup>322</sup>

However, the question remained what contents the “moral force” should contain. In France, because of the higher influence of socialist parties, the “moral force” was assumed to become inspirited by the military’s active engagement in the development of democracy<sup>323</sup>. Focused on the moral dimension of war and its implications for domestic policies, French strategists did not appreciate what Clausewitz named the ‘military virtues’ and the capability of an army to actually fight battles.

The French inferiority complex comprised even the quality of strategic theory and doctrine.

Europeans interested in military theory looked for instruction to Clausewitz, Moltke, and von der Goltz, not to Gilbert, Bonnal, and Foch. A combination of lack of time and lack of intellectual depth may have caused French theorists like Foch to fall back on selective formulas and clichés as substitutes for the more profoundly pondered and documented German theories.<sup>324</sup>

This lack of strategic expertise – in theory as well as in practice – was caused by a military educational system that, prior to World War I, provided no general staff officers comparable with the German standard. As Porch summarizes, “So while Germany possessed a true institution of higher military learning, France organized a vocational school.”<sup>325</sup>

(4) The proper understanding of Clausewitz depends on the availability of strategic minds. Germany, although possessing a general staff and high-level military

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<sup>322</sup> Porch, *Clausewitz and the French, 1871-1914*, p. 299-300.

<sup>323</sup> Echevarria II, *After Clausewitz*, p. 116-118.

<sup>324</sup> Porch, *Clausewitz and the French, 1871-1914*, p. 292.

education facilities, lost the strategic dimension of war by concentrating on operational and tactical solutions of strategic challenges.<sup>326</sup> Ludendorff's answer on the strategic goals of the German offensives in spring 1918 serves as an excellent example of this decline in strategic thinking: "We will punch a hole in their line. For the rest, we will see". As Gray comments, "Although admirably flexible, such an approach translates in practice into pure expediency, tactical pragmatism innocent of strategic command."<sup>327</sup> With Ludendorff, the Moltkian reduction of Clausewitz's definition of strategy found its own reductionist perfection. From this point of view, Clausewitz appears to be one of the last military strategists in Germany. Under his successors, "The army made operational solutions do duty for problems that were as much economic as political."<sup>328</sup> Officers tried to solve political and military problems by improper means: political problems were confronted with military means;<sup>329</sup> and strategic problems were confronted with operational and tactical means<sup>330</sup>. Therefore, German commanders did not strongly consider what Clausewitz emphasized: that the enemy is a thinking enemy that adapts to new weapons or tactics, and finally develops a successful countermeasure.<sup>331</sup> To

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<sup>325</sup> Porch, *Clausewitz and the French, 1871-1914*, p. 293.

<sup>326</sup> This decline is broadly described in Geyer, Michael, "German Strategy in the Age of machine Warfare, 1914-1945", in Peter Paret, *Makers of Modern Strategy*, pp. 527-597.

<sup>327</sup> Gray, *Modern Strategy*, p. 47.

<sup>328</sup> Gray, *Modern Strategy*, p. 51.

<sup>329</sup> Wallach, *Misperceptions of Clausewitz' On War by the German Military*, p. 235.

<sup>330</sup> This was reinforced by a confusion between strategy and operation. See Murray, *Clausewitz: Some Thoughts on What the Germans Got Right*, p. 268-269: "If Moltke sometimes confused strategic policy and operational concerns, it is clear that his successors increasingly identified strategy with operations, denying political goals and concerns any influence over military matters, even in peace." (p. 269) See also Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, pp. 256, 260. As Geyer argues, the emphasis of the art of military operations "... served only one superior rationale: to preserve war as a professional domain" (Geyer, Michael, "German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare, 1914-1945", in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy*, p. 531).

<sup>331</sup> Echevarria II, *After Clausewitz*, p. 224.

summarize, “The principal German problem in both world wars was that the country lacked a competent strategy-making, and strategy-reviewing, body.”

Furthermore, most of the Wehrmacht generals<sup>332</sup> who conducted campaigns successfully at the operational level, disregarded Clausewitz’s advice: commanders are justified, in every single case, to demand that policy not come into contradiction with the nature of the military mean. In the end, when confronted with strict political power, German generals often obeyed in spite of their own convictions which were derived from their military professionalism.

In Britain before World War I, no strategic culture existed. One major reason is traceable to the regimental system. As Reid argues, “the regimental system is less a dynamic instrument of organization preparing for the next war than a form of social gathering in which its members feel comfortable and exhibit those fierce tribal loyalties to which the British are so prone.”<sup>333</sup> Although this regimental system has remained until today, the strategic culture in Britain changed radically with the traumatic experience of World War I:

That before 1914 Great Britain produced no military theorist of the first water, yet after 1918 produced two, requires some comment. It had a very great deal to do with Fuller and Liddell Hart’s experience of the First World War. Their work was a response to this traumatic experience, and the widespread feeling, evident among junior officers, that something had gone awfully wrong and this ‘something’ ought to be rectified before the next war. As comparatively junior officers, Fuller and Liddell Hart were representative figures of this reforming impulse.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> General Beck is an exception. See Hahlweg, *Das Clausewitz-Bild*, pp. 114-116, 1315; Müller, Klaus-Jürgen, “Clausewitz, Ludendorff and Beck: Some Remarks on Clausewitz’ Influence on German Military Thinking in the 1930s and 1940s”, in Michael I. Handel (ed.), *Clausewitz and modern Strategy*, Kansas: Frank Cass, 1986, pp. 240-266.

<sup>333</sup> Reid, *Studies in British Military Thought*, p. 9.

<sup>334</sup> Reid, *Studies in British Military Thought*, p. 170.



These two strategic theorists dominated the Clausewitz interpretation in Britain after World War I and continue to influence it until today. In order to underline their alternative approach to strategy, Fuller and Liddell Hart "... persisted in connecting Clausewitz to the errors of the Great War that they wished to extirpate...".<sup>335</sup> Therefore, it was difficult for them to integrate Clausewitz in their own strategies, although this, as the comparison showed, would have been quite easily possible. Besides the intend to write a new strategic theory, national prejudices, reinforced by the War and the Nazism in Germany after 1933, might have led to a "... nationalistic reluctance of British authors to align themselves too closely with any foreign thinker on war, especially the militarily unfashionable Germans".<sup>336</sup>

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

The main assumption of this study is that the development of a common strategic paradigm will facilitate political integration and military cooperation within the EU. Proposing that Clausewitz's theory of war and strategy may serve as the framework of the desirable common strategic paradigm, this study reveals several commonalities and diversities in the Clausewitz interpretation between Britain, France, and Germany. Commonalities that appear to be characteristic for the European nation states' approach to strategy were

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<sup>335</sup> Bassford, *Clausewitz in English*, p. 213.

<sup>336</sup> Bassford, *Clausewitz in English*, p. 63. Bassdorf highlights the anti-militaristic tradition in Britain that led to the accusation of being militaristic when exposed as being a Clausewitzian (Bassford, *Clausewitz in English*, p. 124).

- the increased national interest in strategic theory after wars;
- the desire of many military strategists to reduce the complexity of strategy-making through the prescription of clear and simple strategic principles;
- the decisive contribution of scholars to the scientific reconstruction of military history and to the development of strategic theory;
- the neglect of the multidimensionality of strategy in order to concentrate exclusively on those dimensions that are perceived as most critical.

Differences among Britain, France, and Germany existed

- in the realm of civil-military relations, particularly with regard to the institutional implementation of the primacy of policies;
- the recognition of strategy *or* operations and tactics as points of main emphasis;
- in the scientific cultures – philosophy or empiricism - as the intellectual environment for the development of strategic theories.

Asking for reasons of commonalities and diversities, this study succeeded in revealing several common and specific elements of the national strategic cultures. The interpretation and making of strategic theory was influenced by

- the geopolitical situation;
- the changing balance-of-power relationship between Britain, France, and Germany;
- the quality of military education in the realm of strategy;

- the intention to develop alternative strategic concepts.

Even commanders of the armed forces quite often misunderstood Clausewitz's theoretical writing. Most of them just wanted to use his authority as justification for *their* solutions of strategic problems.<sup>337</sup> In general, military commanders were not willing to reflect upon their own strategic predispositions critically, which implies to confront national strategy-making with Clausewitz's comprehensive theory of war and strategy. Consequently, national strategies often did not meet the complexity of the current strategic situation.

Seen from this background, the contribution of scientists and scholars to strategy-making in general and the Clausewitz interpretation in particular is of utmost importance. As Wallace argues, "... it is one thing to hold Clausewitz in high esteem and to idolize him, but a different thing to study him intellectually and intelligently, to try to penetrate into the depth of his thoughts and to digest and absorb his ideas."<sup>338</sup> Scholars possess the proper education to understand Clausewitz's theoretical writings, in particular, and strategy in general, in the scientific manner Clausewitz applies. Furthermore, scholars are less eager to gain practical - and that often implies simple and fast - solutions from scientific strategic thinking.

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<sup>337</sup> Aron, *Clausewitz. Den Krieg denken*, p. 693.

<sup>338</sup> Wallach, *Misperceptions of Clausewitz' On War by the German Military*, p. 235. In all European countries, some theoreticians actually understood Clausewitz. They offered alternative strategic models, like Jean de Bloch, and, in France, A. Grouard (Aron, *Clausewitz. Philosopher of War*, pp. 251, 263.) However, situations are rare in which marginal persons were tasked to reform strategic concepts and institutions; see Reid, *Studies in British Military Thought*, p. 231; Bond, Brian, and Alexander, Martin, "Liddell Hart and De Gaulle: The Doctrines of Limited Liability and Mobile Defense", in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy*, p. 623.

Without question, *On War* offers many opportunities for misunderstandings, as Bassdorf highlights.<sup>339</sup> However, Clausewitz is not responsible for these misunderstandings. He implies a scientific way of thinking that he assumes as appropriate to meet the complexity of war. The Prussian philosopher of war, actually, anticipated that his writings would be misunderstood in many different ways. However, that the quality of the strategic education would, at least in Germany, decline that dramatically, was not foreseeable, and definitely not the intention of Clausewitz and his Prussian co-reformers. Consequently, strategic education of politicians, officers and officials must emphasize the scientific approach to deal with complex strategic issues.

In spite of all historical differences elaborated in this study, it remains very promising that a basic consensus exists between Clausewitz and those British strategic theorists who had intended to establish a different, even anti-Clausewitzian way of strategy-making. Indeed, as this study shows, the special British way of war and strategy can be easily integrated into Clausewitz's more comprehensive theory. By this, however, the limitations of the British way become apparent.

Ironically, in spite of the catastrophes of World War I and World War II, there is a European tradition that strategic theorists intend to limit war. As Luvaas argues, "Jomini probably spoke for most professional soldiers when he confessed that as a military man he preferred 'loyal and chivalric war to organized assassination', which may help to explain why he focused his attention on the more traditional aspects of the art of war – strategy, grand tactics, and logistics."<sup>340</sup> Liddell Hart, in this respect, stays within the Jominian "Weltanschauung". The British theorist's "indirect approach" even aims,

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<sup>339</sup> Bassford, *John Keegan and the Grand Tradition of Trashing Clausewitz*, p. 3.

ideally, to prevent battle. “*The true aim is not so much to seek battle as to seek a strategic situation so advantageous that if it does not of itself produce the decision, its continuation by a battle is sure to achieve this.*”<sup>341</sup> Also Clausewitz developed the concept of limited war. Actually, he pursues the same aim as Jomini and Liddell Hart do. However, he chooses a different way. Instead of prescribing strategic principles that serve limited warfare but do not meet the complexity of war, Clausewitz intends to make politicians and commanders aware of the dangerous nature of war. As Messelken argues, “Such an policy which intends to prevent war with the highest efforts, should be based on a science trying to understand with the highest seriousness how wars really are”.<sup>342</sup> Thus, the Prussian philosopher of war encourages politicians, officers, and officials to acquire a broad knowledge about real war and strategy as multidimensional phenomena. And, he placed enormous responsibility on the shoulders of officers, commanders in particular, to cooperate with politicians and officials.

Many of the reasons causing different interpretations of Clausewitz’s theoretical writings as well as different strategy-making concepts do not exist anymore in today’s EU. Germany has established the necessary institutions and educational facilities to ensure the primacy of policy. Geopolitical differences and balance-of-power policies are, as Clausewitz would argue, still an underlying reality in European inter-governmental relations. However, they are arched over by a collective security architecture that has provided not only gains for all European states but also contributed to a European

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<sup>340</sup> Luvaas, *Clausewitz, Fuller and Liddell Hart*, pp. 197.

<sup>341</sup> Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, p. 365.

<sup>342</sup> Messelken, Karlheinz, “Denkweisen und Denkfiguren dreier Jahrhunderte”, in Gerhard Vowinckel (ed.), *Clausewitz-Kolloquium*, Berlin: Humboldt&Duncker, 1991, p. 25 (translated by U.H.).

socialization. In the end, even cultural differences, for example in the field of science, can be overcome through international education.

To conclude, Clausewitz's theory of war and strategy can serve as a common European paradigm on strategy. Even if the development of a strategic paradigm is very likely to take time, the explanation of differences, the abolishment of misperceptions, and the reconciliation of strategic theories might help politicians, officials and officers to establish an improved communication and cooperation in developing common European military strategies.

In the next chapter, Clausewitz's theory of war will be applied to main strategic challenges of the future EU military forces. First of all, the strategic environment of the EU forces needs to be investigated. Then, a strategic challenge will be examined in more detail that is expected to be of utmost importance for the EU: how to deal with multinationality?

#### **IV. CLAUSEWITZ AND THE MILITARY STRATEGY OF THE EU**

Chapter III supports the thesis' main argument that Clausewitz's theory of war can be used as a common strategic paradigm for a future EU military strategy. Chapter IV intends to test the usefulness of Clausewitz's theory in assessing the strategic environment of the EU. Within this chapter, main propositions of Clausewitz's theory are used to analyze, first, the political process that finally led to the establishment of a CSDP and EU military forces, and secondly, the multinationality as a strategic principle of EU military operations. Again, Clausewitz's theory of war proves its usefulness, specifically by providing awareness of areas of strategic concerns and challenges. Providing a short reconstruction of the process that led to the establishment of EU military forces, and a strategic evaluation of the decisions made so far facilitates the understanding of this chapter.

##### **A. THE POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT**

Since the end of the Cold War, strategic discussions beyond the nuclear level have regained importance in Europe. This is particularly true for Britain, France, and Germany as the major military powers in Europe. Being member states of NATO, these countries participated profoundly in the development of the new NATO Strategic Concepts that were endorsed in 1991 and 1999<sup>343</sup>. At the same time, these countries have conducted

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<sup>343</sup> In November 1991, the NATO member states agreed on a Strategic Concept to meet the challenges of the new security environment; however, the then still existing SU remained in the center of the threat assessment (de Wyck, *NATO on the Brink of the new Millenium*, p. 15). In particular

internal discussions about national security strategy, and about their interests, objectives, assumptions, means, and restraints. However, the content, intensity, and results of these still ongoing debates have been quite different. Britain and France developed national strategies that favor multinational cooperation but emphasize the capability to act independently. By contrast, Germany, which during the Cold War had transferred strategic decision-making authority entirely to NATO, emphasized multinational responsibilities and the necessity to exclusively decide upon and conduct military operations multilaterally.<sup>344</sup> In spite of these differences, all European states were forced to reform their military forces.<sup>345</sup>

## **1. Britain's and France's Strategic Initiative**

France and Britain have dominated the strategic debate in Europe. In November 1998, Prime Minister Tony Blair and president Jacques Chirac surprised NATO allies and EU partners with a Joint Declaration issued at the British-French Summit in Saint-Malo, France. Proclaiming that the “European Union needs to be in a position to play its full role on the international stage...” Blair and Chirac requested the EU’s “...capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use

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because of the experience of the NATO missions in the Balkans, a New Strategic Concept of NATO was approved on the NATO Summit in Washington D.C. on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of April 1999 (Schneider, Peter, *The Evolution of NATO: The Alliance's strategic concept and its predecessors, 1945-2000*, Thesis Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, June 2000). This strategic document puts high emphasis on “... the appearance of complex new risks to EuroAtlantic peace and stability, including oppression, ethnic conflict, economic distress, the collapse of political order, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction” (NATO, *The New Strategic Concept*, 1999, p. 1, available (online): <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm199899/cmselect/cmdfence/459/45906...> (07.02.01). Consequently, crisis management has become one of the core elements of NATO strategy.

<sup>344</sup> Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, *Weißbuch 1994*, Bonn 1994, p. 45.



them, and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises".<sup>346</sup> This initiative and its further development in several EU summits<sup>347</sup> have decisively influenced the strategic situation in Europe.

At the Helsinki European Council (EC) in December 1999, agreement was achieved on the following:

Co-operating voluntarily in EU-led operations, Member States must be able by 2003, to deploy within 60 days and sustain for at least 1 year military forces of up to 50,000-60,000 persons capable of the full range of Petersberg tasks. New political and military bodies and structures will be established within the Council to enable the Union to ensure the necessary political guidance and strategic direction to such operations, while respecting the single institutional framework. (...) A Non-military crisis management mechanism will be established to coordinate and make more effective the various civilian means and resources, in parallel with the military ones, at the disposal of the Union and the Member States.<sup>348</sup>

With regard to strategy and force planning, the EC announced the necessity to improve some key military capabilities: among these the establishment of a European air transport command, the enhancement of strategic sealift capacity, the coordination of monitoring and early warning military means.<sup>349</sup> With regard to NATO, the EC emphasized that the creation of the CSDP and the European Rapid Reaction Forces (ERRF) does not intend to undermine the transatlantic links.

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<sup>345</sup> More details in Unterseher, *Europe's Armed Forces at the Millenium*.

<sup>346</sup> Joint Declaration issued at the British-French Summit, Saint-Malo, France, 3-4 December 1998, available (online): <http://www.fco.gov.uk/news/newstext.asp?1795>, p.1 (02.02.01).

<sup>347</sup> The ESDP process was continued at the Cologne European Council, 3-4 June 1999, at the WEU Ministerial Meeting in Luxembourg, November 1999, and during the UK-French Summit some days later, where the establishment of a European Rapid Reaction Corps was proposed.

<sup>348</sup> Presidency Conclusions, Helsinki, European Council 10 and 11 December 1999, quoted in Oakes, *European Defense: From Pörschach to Helsinki*, p. 32. A smaller rapid reaction element is announced to possess an even higher operational readiness.

<sup>349</sup> Oakes, *European Defense: From Pörschach to Helsinki*, pp. 32- 33.

The discussion- and decision-making process from St. Malo to Nice displays several characteristics of the European strategy-making:

- 1) Britain and France have taken over the leadership in promoting the ESDP. Consequently, Britain *and* France will provide leadership in the strategy making process.
- 2) Both, Britain and France, have changed their traditional positions significantly. Britain that already had committed itself with the British Army of the Rhein during the Cold War period, has not revitalized its traditional reluctance to get militarily involved in continental affairs; France committed itself not to instrumentalize the EU in order to undermine the transatlantic partnership with the US in NATO.
- 3) The military forces of the EU must be capable of the full range of Petersberg tasks, including peace-making operations. The initial military strength, however, is sufficient only for achieving very limited political and military aims. To meet the risks of escalation and failure that Clausewitz emphasizes so strongly, the ERRF needs to be reinforced, either by national means of the EU member states or by NATO, in especially by the US. Due to different, mainly financial, restraints, the reliance of the EU on NATO in any major military scenario will remain even in the long perspective. Consequently, the EU has announced it will conduct military operations only where NATO as a whole is not engaged. Even for these cases, the EU plans to provide full consultation and transparency with NATO.
- 4) EU forces are to move to the crisis region instead of waiting until the crisis comes to the EU member states' territories. Consequently, the EU military strategy is offensive and proactive, containing all the advantages and disadvantages of offensive-proactive

action on a strategic level. To prevent escalation of crisis situations and even major war scenarios, the deployment of EU forces is to be conducted as early as possible. This requires not only a high operational readiness of forces but also a speedy strategic decision-making process on the involved inter-governmental *and* national political and military levels. Therefore, the EU military strategy cannot rely on the indirect approach of waiting until favorable conditions have been achieved.

- 5) The political decision-making process on the use of EU military forces is located within the European Council. A standing Political and Security Committee (PSC) provides the necessary political strategic direction. The Military Committee (MC), comprising the national Chiefs of Defense, gives military advice. The MC has to submit military direction to the Military Staff (MS) that include representatives of all branches of the member states' armed forces. Finally, the MC is responsible for strategic planning, including the identification of European national and multinational forces. Thus, the primacy of policies and close civil-military cooperation are ensured institutionally.
- 6) The EU strategy is based on a broad security understanding. This comprises not only economic means but also, for example, police forces assigned to the EU. In general, also on the strategic level, close cooperation with civilian agencies (IOs and NGOs) will be established through a non-military crisis management element<sup>350</sup> that works in parallel to the military staff.

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<sup>350</sup> See also Solana, Speech at the Institut für Europäische Politik, Berlin, 17 December 1999 , available (online): <http://ue.eu.int/newsroom>: (March 2001) "We have established an action plan to ensure that we are able to respond rapidly and more effectively with non-military tools to emerging crisis situations". According to Voigt, a 'Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management' has been established. "It has set up a database on civilian police and is now compiling data on rule of law-experts. .... by 2003 the EU wants to be able to provide up to 5,000 police officers crisis management

- 7) The EU strategy is peace-oriented. Military engagements, in particular wars, should be avoided by other means. Generally, military engagements are to be conducted in such a way that the requirements of the future peace building process in the area of operations are always regarded.
- 8) The military area of operations has enlarged up to 3000 miles outside the EU territory. Thus, military operations must be joint operations requiring strategic logistics with extended (Sea) Lines of Communication.
- 9) Multinationality is a strategic principle. This demands efforts to “... adapt, exercise and bring together national and multinational European forces”<sup>351</sup>, including the opening of existing joint national headquarters to officers coming from other nations.<sup>352</sup>

## **2. Reasons of the Paradigmatic Shift**

A very short look at the history of British-French relations highlights that the St. Malo Declaration marks a paradigmatic shift in strategic thinking. In general, the history of British-French relations had been a history of war, conflict, and competition, not only in Europe but in colonial affairs as well. Facing Germany as a common threat, Britain and France started forms of military cooperation in 1894. However, actual cooperation in

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operations, among them 1,000 officers within 30 days“ (Voigt, *The discussion on ESDP as Part of the Birth Pangs of a New Atlanticism*, Address at the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, 14.02.01, p. 7-8).

<sup>351</sup> Annex III of Presidency Conclusions, Cologne European Council 3-4 June 1999, quoted in Oakes, *European Defense: From Pörtlach to Helsinki*, p. 24.

<sup>352</sup> The opening of national joint headquarters is necessary because multinational joint headquarters outside NATO do not exist. EU military operations can be conducted by British, French or even German national headquarters, enlarged by delegations or representatives of the force contributing

World War I and World War II remained very poor. Instead, it was the US, that Britain cooperated with very closely.<sup>353</sup> Even after World War II, in NATO, Britain and France pursued different policies. Britain continued its special relationship with the US, while France remained skeptical about the US influence in Europe. Finally, after fierce disputes about strategic questions, France under President de Gaulle finally left the integrated structure of NATO. With Britain closely linked to the US policy in and for Europe, and Germany trying to avoid taking any firm position in the disputes, France appeared to be the only nation that actually represented European interests. France pursued these interests through leadership within the EU (former ECCS, EC). When Britain, mainly due to economic reasons, intended to become a member state of the EC, it was French President de Gaulle in 1963 that said “no”. In the end, it took Britain until 1973 to gain access to the EC.

As in NATO, Britain and France generally pursued different positions in the EU (EC).<sup>354</sup> One example is the European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI). Britain supported the WEU and NATO as institutions to strengthen ESDI while France intended to merge the WEU with the EU and to develop an ESDP rather independently from NATO. And while Britain participated in those multinational formations that were triggered by NATO (ARRC; MND C), France got engaged in the Eurocorps as the military hallmark of the European integration process.

From Britain, the St. Malo Declaration demanded a more radical shift than from France. First of all, Britain traditionally maintained the role as ‘balancer’ for continental

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nations.

<sup>353</sup> Parker, R.A.C., *The Second World War*, Oxford/New York, 1997, pp. 115-130.

Europe, fighting against those states that tried to disturb the balance of power. Secondly, the traditional British strategy of “indirect approach” refused any long-lasting commitments in continental affairs. After the catastrophe of the Great War, Liddell Hart “... claimed that Britain’s successful past strategy (which had been ignored in 1914-18) was to avoid continental commitments, making full use of the flexibility of the sea power and of land forces at exposed weak points, leaving the waging of continental war to Britain’s allies”.<sup>355</sup>

In fact, several very important reasons stimulated Britain and France to conduct this paradigmatic shift. The strong position of the defense industry in Britain<sup>356</sup> and France (state level) and the leadership attitudes of Tony Blair<sup>357</sup>, particularly, (individual level) are relevant but not sufficient reasons. Those reasons have the most weight that are closely tight to Clausewitz’s propositions of the power-of-balance mechanism, and of the necessity to match ends and means in strategy-making:

- (1) After the end of the Cold War the development of the overall balance of power in Europe (system level) caused a loss of “relative power” for Britain and France.

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<sup>354</sup> Young, Hugo, *This Blessed Plot*, Woodstock/New York: The Overlook Press, 1998.

<sup>355</sup> Quoted in Reid, *Studies in British Military Thought*, p. 180.

<sup>356</sup> The building of the British empire provides a reasonable explanation for the strong position of the British defense industry. During the period of conquest and annexation that shaped the British Empire, a state was established that “... was organized to facilitate expansion, and it pursued a consistent commercial and military strategy to achieve it. The state as a military organization, and an apparatus of force and coercion, looms large in this account, and therefore also the importance of the industrial-military complex which has sustained it – particularly the naval shipyards from the seventeenth century onwards, and more recently the aerospace industry” (Gamble, Andrew, “State, Economy and Society”, in Ian Holliday, Andrew Gamble & Geraint Parry (ed.), *Fundamentals in British Politics*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999, p. 37).

<sup>357</sup> Young, *This Blessed Plot*, p. 485.

- (2) The mismatch between strategic objectives and available military means of Britain and France forced them to cooperate and, furthermore, to lead the ESDP, *or* to downgrade their national interests and multinational responsibilities.

(1) In the Cold War period, Britain's power position as a great power in Europe was mainly based on its military capabilities (that include power projection capabilities and nuclear weapons), and on the special relationship with the US. However, Britain's late membership in the then EC and, in the case of the Monetary Union, limited participation in EU projects have reduced its relative power position compared with France and Germany, in particular in the field of economics. With the EU enlargement to East Europe, Britain is likely to continue to lose relative power, in particular compared with Germany. The integration of Britain's economy into the NAFTA, proposed as a logical consequence of the special relationship with the US<sup>358</sup>, has barely found serious attraction.

In the field of military cooperation, Britain has become disconnected from the European trend to establish multinational military formations. While Britain attached all major army formations to the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps of NATO, Germany has emerged as the European state with the most influence in all other multinational formations (Eurocorps, I. (GE/NL) Corps, II. (GE/US) Corps, V. (US/GE) Corps, MNC NE). The Netherlands' army, which traditionally maintained close links to the British army, has been almost entirely integrated into the I. (GE/NL) Corps. Up to now, this Corps has achieved its greatest success in 'deep integration', comprising common

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<sup>358</sup> Black, Conrad, "Britain's Atlantic Option", in *The National Interest*, Spring 1999, p. 20.

funding, administration, and integrated logistics. As a consequence of this success, the government of the Netherlands decided to transfer money to the German Ministry of Defense (not to the British) to contribute in the strategic airlift program of the Bundeswehr.<sup>359</sup>

To improve its relative power position in Europe, Britain assessed the ESDP as the proper place for political and military engagement. In the 90s, the role as the leader or co-leader in the European security and defense issue appeared to be vacant due to Germany's reluctance to gain power through military engagement. Furthermore, Britain traditionally was widely expected to be a profound leader in military issues.<sup>360</sup>

In the Cold War period, France's position as a great power was mainly based on its military capabilities (that include power projection capabilities and nuclear weapons), and on its leading role in the European integration process. However, with Germany's unification and the envisioned eastern enlargement of the EU, France is likely to lose relative power, compared to Germany. The traditionally tense relationship with the US has been favorable for the reputation of France as an independent great power; however, this has led to the self-exclusion of France from the decision-making process of NATO's integrated military structure. With Germany possessing the economic leading role, France needed to reinforce its proclaimed dominant role in the EU, first by establishing a new field of leadership, secondly by looking for a powerful partner. Consequently, France has taken over the co-leadership in the CSDP with Britain. Additionally, with the Eurocorps as assigned headquarter to command KFOR, France has signaled its willingness to

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<sup>359</sup> NATO Parliamentary Assembly Report AT-247-DSC-00-7, pp. 13-15; available (online): <http://www.nato-pa.int/publications/comrep/2000/at-247-e.html> (27.11.00).

<sup>360</sup> See Gamble, *State, Economy and Society*, p. 37: "Britain is regarded as a significant military



cooperate closely with NATO and the US. Finally, all these activities are in line with the overall French policy to decrease the political and military influence of the US in Europe and to confine the power of Germany.

In the end, as Clausewitz would argue, the traditional balance-of-power mechanism worked again in the old fashioned way. The united Germany in post-Cold War Europe has changed the balance-of-power in the EU. Consequently, Britain and France have been forced to react. Germany, realizing the concerns of Britain and France, has acted very cautiously this time. By reducing its military forces more rapidly than Britain and France, Germany signaled that it was not interested in expanding its already gained advantages in relative power by taking over the lead in the military integration of Europe.

(2) Both states, Britain and France, have been following the same strategy: power projection is in the center of their current military strategic concepts. This is primarily for three reasons: First, power projection capabilities are necessary to conduct military operations offensively and proactively. Second, the reduction of oversea-stationed troops has made a stronger reliance on power projection capabilities inevitable. And third, the possession of power projection capabilities is supposed to enhance the international reputation as great powers.

However, a closer look at the currently available military means and the future force planning goals reveals that neither Britain nor France are likely to possess the required means to sustain a power projection strategy. Some examples illustrate this

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power, and its people as a warrior people“.

argument: First, the availability of one or two aircraft carriers is not sufficient for permanent power projection. The US Navy has a rule-of-thumb that five carriers are needed to keep one routinely “on station” at all times.<sup>361</sup> Second, joint operations require the establishment of mobile headquarters at corps level. However, neither Britain nor France is able to maintain this level of command and control in extended operations. Third, the duration of SFOR-/KFOR-type military operations (both are supposed to last for several years if not decades) has not been properly reflected in the force-planning goals.<sup>362</sup> The British army, in particular, is over-committed. Confronted with the mismatch of goals and means, the British and French governments had to decide between two courses of action: to downgrade national interests and multinational responsibilities or to cooperate with the only other European nation that is capable of projecting power.

Several reasons exist why the downsizing of national interests and multinational responsibilities offer no political solution for Britain and France. First, peacekeeping operations in Europe are expected to prevent higher costs that possibly inflicted by large refugee flows or destabilization of entire regions. Secondly, they are expected to contribute to the implementation of a Europe that is united, and free. Third, social democratic and liberal governments put more emphasis on the protection of human rights in their foreign and security policies.<sup>363</sup> And fourth, taking over multinational responsibility is favorable for the state’s reputation.

However, a purely British-French cooperation would again have to be confronted with the mismatch of goals and means, in particular in sustaining military operations. If

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<sup>361</sup> Unterseher, *Europe’s Armed Forces at the Millenium*, p. 15.

<sup>362</sup> Unterseher, *Europe’s Armed Forces at the Millenium*, pp. 16-18 and 28-29.

<sup>363</sup> Howard, Michael, *War and the liberal Conscience*, Cambridge, 1977.

Britain and France conduct power projection operations with an early deployment of forces, these forces are likely to become committed for a long time. Therefore, Britain and France may run out of forces, if new crisis situations emerge. Consequently, British-French cooperation must be reinforced by other European nations. Then, British and French forces can be deployed proactively, while all other forces, due to less power projection capabilities or political reasons, serve mainly to reinforce and to sustain already ongoing military operations. This kind of burden-sharing would definitely maintain the British and French leadership in the ESDP.

However, being aware made by Clausewitz that crisis situations can escalate to wars, EU strategists, at least for the foreseeable future, have to rely on the military capabilities of NATO. Consequently, EU strategy must establish institutional links with NATO in order to guarantee transparency and consultation.

## **B. MULTINATIONALITY**

Multinationality in military operations has been a hallmark of European military affairs from the antiquity to World War II.<sup>364</sup> From Clausewitz's point of view, coalitions in Europe have had one major reason: whenever states try to gain hegemony over the other states, the latter build a coalition to re-establish the traditional balance-of-power.

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<sup>364</sup> Historic examples are listed in Klein, Paul, *Probleme in multinationalen militärischen Verbänden am Beispiel der Deutsch-Französischen Brigade*, SOWI-Arbeitspapier Nr. 83, München, September 1993. Modern multinationality is broadly discussed in Rasmussen, Ingrid: NATO Parliamentary Assembly, committee Reports, *Defense and security. Draft special report: Multinationality in crisis response operations*, 22.09.2000, available (online): [www.nato-pa.int/publications/comrep/2000/at-244-e.html](http://www.nato-pa.int/publications/comrep/2000/at-244-e.html) (March 2001).

The process of the multinationalizing military structures and operations<sup>365</sup> in the 90's can be traced back to several reasons. Governments and military commanders have argued that multinationality

- serves as a justification of stopping further reductions of the armed forces, as demanded by large groups in civil society as a kind of 'peace dividend' after the end of the Cold War;
- is necessary to maintain the corps level that is required to command joint operations<sup>366</sup>;
- improves burden sharing among allied nations;
- increases military efficiency and flexibility;
- socializes the soldiers of the member states in common doctrines, values, and behavior.

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<sup>365</sup> In the 90s, six multinational corps have been established in Europe, and several multinational operations have been conducted. A closer look at the multinational corps reveals that they are not always structured in the same way. All have multinational staffs that already exist in peace times. However, the staffs are organized in different ways. While the ARRC and the two GE-US corps follow the lead nation-principle, the other corps have integrated staffs: all nations involved provide the same amount of resources to make the headquarters operational. Only one multinational corps is actually commanding subordinated divisions and divisional troops in peacetime: that is the I. GE/NL Corps. Additionally, the I. GE/NL Corps is the only multinational corps that pursues deep integration. Since the mid-90's, NATO and WEU conducted several multinational operations. SFOR in Bosnia, for example, used to have three multinational divisions, organized in accordance with the lead nation-principle. Multinationality within SFOR has not only been practiced at SFOR headquarters or divisional headquarters level, but also at brigade, battalion and company level, and even in smaller units, like police guards.

<sup>366</sup> Not only smaller countries but also Britain did not possess sufficient forces to maintain national corps headquarters. Therefore, Britain volunteered to staff the ARRC as lead nation. Thus, Britain can keep influence within military formations just below the command level of the integrated structure that actually accomplish military operations, maintain the expertise of conducting military operations at the tactical level where joint operations actually can be launched, and keep forces in reunited Germany as a stabilizing and reassuring factor.

## 1. The Dark Side: Crises

The history of NATO shows that, beyond several advantages of multinationality, crises are characteristic for alliances. In common understanding, crises are expected to be negative, to be something that should be avoided. However, as existential philosophy shows<sup>367</sup>, crises might strengthen the capabilities of individuals, organizations, and even states to deal with the challenges of their existence. Without a doubt, a sound philosophical deduction would not conclude that crisis situations should be triggered intentionally. Crises, for sure, are dangerous. However, once a crisis is on the way, individuals, organizations, and states can try to overcome a crisis in a way that strengthens their capabilities.

Some organizations are more susceptible to crises than others. In general, multinationality is one reason for a higher degree of crisis susceptibility. With regard to defense and security organizations, Clausewitz's theory of war provides a useful explanation for this phenomenon. Clausewitz argues that war is the continuation of policies and politics with other means.<sup>368</sup> This proposition includes the government, the people, and the commander (with the military forces subordinated to him) as major actors. Generally, these actors create a specific interrelationship. First of all, even during war, the political intercourse between people and their governments is continued.<sup>369</sup> This is, especially, true for democracies that have established democratic cultures

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<sup>367</sup> Bollnow, Otto F., *Existenzphilosophie und Pädagogik*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 1984.

<sup>368</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 87.

<sup>369</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 605.

encompassing civil societies.<sup>370</sup> Secondly, the commander of the military forces is subordinated to the political government. Again, this is one of the most important hallmarks of democratic political systems, although the experience of the two most developed democracies, the US and Britain, exemplifies that this relationship is subject to permanent disputes and conflicts<sup>371</sup>. In general, relations in terms of power and interests can change between the people, the government, and the commander with his military forces.

Alliances and coalitions integrate and, thus, duplicate the “fascinating trinity”<sup>372</sup> of government, people and commander (with the subordinated military forces) in accordance with the number of states involved. Therefore, with several independent actors involved in multinational decision-making and implementation of strategies, command and control appears to be rather limited, while complexity and friction tend to be unlimited. Consequently, military alliances and coalitions face stronger problems of achieving consensus in strategy-making than purely national systems. In general, they are more susceptible to crises; the high number of political actors involved in political-military strategy-making and its operational-tactical implementation increases the probability that national interests and political objectives are different.

Multinationality definitely increases complexity and friction. By this, additional complexity and friction is added to the already high amount of complexity and friction that characterizes war. War, as Clausewitz stated very clearly, is the realm of danger, of

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<sup>370</sup> See Diamond, Larry, *Developing Democracy toward Consolidation*, Baltimore and London, 1999, pp. 161-260.

<sup>371</sup> Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army*; Hogan, *A Cross of Iron*.

<sup>372</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 89.

exhaustion, of lack of information, and, nota bene, of the independent action of the enemy (and the neutral countries).<sup>373</sup> In alliances, it is not only the nature of war and the independent will of the enemy that causes complexity and friction but also the unpredictability of the political and military action of the allies. Consequently, at least in theory, complexity and friction have a tendency to the extreme if the opponent parties are both alliances comprising democratic member states.

Clausewitz is very realistic about the reasons why states become involved in military alliances and why the states' contributions to the alliance's goal are often rather limited. Maintaining national command and control about their force contributions to alliances, states remain capable of pursuing national policies – that include the opportunity to even withdraw their military contingents from the theatre of operations. Furthermore, as Clausewitz recovered from military history,

... even when both states (of the alliance; U.H.) are in earnest about making war upon the third, they do not always say, 'we must treat this country as our common enemy and destroy it, or we shall be destroyed ourselves.' Far from it: the affair is more often like a business deal. In the light of the risks he expects and the dividend he hopes for, each will invest about 30,000 to 40,000 men, and behave as if that were all he stood to lose.<sup>374</sup>

This business-type involvement of nations in alliances is prevalent in those cases where the threat of opponent forces is more limited. Consequently, different national interests and political objectives of member states of alliances might cause that "... interaction, the effort to outdo the enemy, the violent and compulsive course of war, all

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<sup>373</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 75-77.

<sup>374</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 603.

stagnate for lack of real incentive.”<sup>375</sup> Consequently, complexity and friction within alliances can be higher in cases of limited warfare than in cases of rather unlimited warfare.

Finally, recognizing that multinational strategy-making is, like warfare, a “... movement in a resistant element”<sup>376</sup>, one can conclude that crises in alliances are quite normal affairs. Consequently, the main emphasis should be put on the question of how to prevent negative impacts of crises on the alliance’s ends and means and how to take advantage of the crises to increase its reliability and efficiency.

## **2. Lesson Learned from NATO Crises**

NATO may serve as an excellent lesson learned for the EU. What were the common elements of NATO crises? Clausewitz, by describing war as a “fascinating trinity”, provides the theoretical framework for analyzing and assessing NATO crises. The most important reason for crises appears to be the national policies and politics that the governments of member states pursue within NATO. Multinational strategies (of warfare, or crisis management, or deterrence, or detente) are always a – more or less dominant<sup>377</sup> - reflection of domestic policies and politics.<sup>378</sup> The behavior and political

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<sup>375</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 604.

<sup>376</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 120.

<sup>377</sup> In general, the importance of domestic issues has the tendency to decrease with the perceived level of threat.

<sup>378</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 580. How important public opinion for the cohesion of the NATO alliance in the 80s was when peace movements in Europe, in particular in Germany, seem to dominate security politics, is explained in Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance*, p. 125. Thomas cites the US Secretary of State and former SACEUR Alexander Haig who declared, “the nuclear debate in Europe has become a battle for the soul of Europe”.



action of specific states within the alliance can only be understood if this domestic political intercourse is considered. Consequently, an alliance can only act successfully, if the alliance's aims and political and military decision-making institutions are sufficiently flexible to meet the essential requirements of single member states' domestic policies and politics.

A second important reason, which all NATO crises have in common, is that mutual trust between the allies was not sufficient to overcome emerging skepticism about the political and military reliability of specific fellow allies, in particular the leading nation. The significance of mutual trust as a reason to explain NATO crises is based on the theoretical proposition that, in general, trust is necessary to reduce complexity. Consequently, if states are in doubt about the willingness of allies to agree on a common policy and to provide the necessary means to accomplish this policy, crises are inevitably the result.

The third reason is closely connected to the second one. In alliances comprising nations of unequal political and military strength, leadership is necessary. This is especially true for alliances in which decision-making is based on the consensus principle. Consequently, leadership is connected with specific attributes the member states of the alliance expect from the leadership nation. However, these expectations might be in contradiction with the national interests of the latter.

### *a. The Policies and Politics of NATO's Member States*

In international crises and wars that threaten the political independence and even existence of states and societies, all member states of alliances have the tendency to agree on strategies of rather unlimited warfare and are willing to provide the means necessary to implement this strategy. However, disagreement might occur about the implementation of the agreed strategy in specific situations, about common action in situations not covered by the strategy, about the use of specific means, and, in a paradigmatic change of the security environment, about the structure and elements of a new strategy. All these disagreements are connected with different national policies and politics and have the potential to trigger crises within an alliance. This has been also true for NATO.

Assessing the Soviet Union military capabilities as an existential threat, all NATO members were willing to take the measures deemed necessary and remaining within the restrictions imposed, particularly, by the national economy<sup>379</sup>. Within NATO, the fundamental difference between the US and the European states was the latter's loss of independence in security policy. As Jordan argues, "The Europeans accepted the strategy (of MC/48). In so doing, they were transferring to the American president, and in some cases even to the American military commanders, the power to start a war – a power which in extreme cases might have to be exercised without even consulting

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<sup>379</sup> The limitations imposed by the economy, in particular, were recognized in NATO's strategic concepts. Although the US had significantly more assets available than all European NATO states together, the US had to organize defense in such a way that neither the economy was set in danger nor the society was transformed to a garrison state. See Pedlow, *The Evolution of NATO Strategy 1949-1969*; Hogan, *A Cross of Iron*, pp. 67-69, 464-468.

them”<sup>380</sup>. Essentially, this remained true during the entire Cold War. The following discusses historic examples of the power mismatch within the alliance that caused friction and, finally, crises.

For the Western Continental European states, in particular for Germany, the basic assumption of the first NATO strategic concepts (1949-1950) that NATO would be unable to prevent the rapid overrunning of Europe unless it immediately employed nuclear weapons was a matter of highest national concern. First of all, the use of nuclear weapons would have devastated the front states, Germany in particular. Secondly, gaining popular support<sup>381</sup> for the increase of defense expenditures - in Germany for the rearmament - proved difficult, as long as these countries remained the target area of US nuclear weapons. Consequently, Germany, supported by others (for example, France), intended to shift the defense line as far east as possible. Heavily depending on the still incomplete German conventional forces to contribute to the alliance’s defense, NATO changed the subsequent strategic concepts. In the MC 14, forward defense as far east as possible was established as guidance.<sup>382</sup> Thus, through alternation of the core element of the strategic concept, NATO prevented a crisis. However, the consequences for the strategic reliability of NATO were severe. NATO agreed to change the strategic concept into forward defense, although the necessary means to implement forward defense were

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<sup>380</sup> Jordan, *Norstad*, p. 88. See also p. 94. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, for example, the European allies were not consulted. During the Kosovo war, the US also acted independently, without informing its allies. See Daalder/O’Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, p. 124.

<sup>381</sup> Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance*, p. 19; Pedlow, *The Evolution of NATO Strategy 1949-1969*.

<sup>382</sup> Pedlow, *The Evolution of NATO Strategy 1949-1969*, p. IV: „MC 14 instructed military planners in the Regional Planning Groups to develop plans aimed at holding the enemy as far to the east as possible, as far to the east and north as possible in Italy, and ‚outside a defensible area‘ in Northern Europe.“ See MC 14/1 on p. 212: “The concept for the defense of Western Europe is to hold the enemy as far to the east in Germany as is feasible, using all offensive and defensive means available to deny or limit his freedom of action to the maximum extent.”

not available (even in the near future). Apparently, rhetoric that had already used oversimplification as a proper means to achieve acceptance of the NATO treaty and its expenditures<sup>383</sup>, was now applied to solve internal conflicts in military strategy-making.<sup>384</sup>

By contrast to Germany, when France challenged the nuclear strategy of NATO by insisting on gaining a specific role in the nuclear decision-making process (stationing and use of nuclear weapons), NATO did not change its policy. In the field of nuclear policies of NATO, the national interests of the US and France collided. Finally, the US was even willing to accept France's defection from the integrated military structure although this implied a major revision of NATO's strategy. Without France, no close rear area was available neither for the stationing of nuclear weapons nor for the embarkation of follow-on-forces and supply. Even NATO headquarters would have been moved from French soil. In spite of these strategic disadvantages, the US was unwilling to reconcile its national position with the French one. Rigid US policy, enforced by a historic disinclination to France<sup>385</sup>, contributed to the latter's incremental disintegration out of the military structure of NATO. In the end, a closer look at the propositions of the leading French theorists on nuclear strategy reveals that NATO even through institutional

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<sup>383</sup> Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance*, p. 19.

<sup>384</sup> The negative influence of rhetoric on the making of strategy was repeated in the Kosovo war when NATO (with the US in lead) formulated political goals that were not in line with the strategic objectives and military means of NATO. For further information see Daalder/O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, pp. 11, 101-136.

<sup>385</sup> Harper reconstructs the tense relationship between Roosevelt and de Gaulle (Harper, John L., *American Visions of Europe*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 115-117). Jordan states that "... the US treated Britain and France differently in regard to nuclear affairs" (Jordan, *Norstad*, p. 110).

changes or rhetoric means probably would not have been successful in preventing de Gaulle to defect.<sup>386</sup>

From 1956 on, with the Soviet Union's parity in the field of intercontinental weapons, the US became worried about NATO's strategy of massive retaliation. Furthermore, lessons learned from crisis management in Berlin crises indicated what became evident during the Cuban missile crisis: sufficient conventional means<sup>387</sup> must be available to solve military conflicts and to prevent limited conflicts from causing a devastating nuclear exchange. Therefore, the US administration under Kennedy pushed towards the development of a strategy that offered a flexible response<sup>388</sup> to different military challenges. The continental Europeans, however, preferred to keep the strategy of massive retaliation. Their governments feared a decoupling of Europe from the US, in particular the danger of a war between the US and the Soviet Union (SU) that could be limited to Europe as theater of war<sup>389</sup>. Finally, the disputes about a new NATO strategy were solved in a way that, in the long run, strengthened NATO significantly. With the dismissal of de Gaulle and social democratic parties taking over government in several European countries, the strategy of flexible response was adopted and, initiated by the Europeans, enlarged by a dual track approach

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<sup>386</sup> The French strategy is briefly described in Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance*, pp. 80-81.

<sup>387</sup> See Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance*, pp. 69-70.

<sup>388</sup> Pedlow, *The Evolution of NATO Strategy 1949-1969*, p. XII: "For the Berlin Crisis, at least, 'flexible response' was already a reality by 1962." See also p. XIV.

<sup>389</sup> This fear emerged at latest with the perceived vulnerability of the US territory caused by the Sputnik-shock. Pedlow, *The Evolution of NATO Strategy 1949-1969*, p. XI.

of the Harmel-report that allowed the Europeans to take the initiative in the detente policy of NATO.<sup>390</sup>

When the war in former Yugoslavia started, Europe was supposed to find a political-military solution. However, without the US, Europe was not able to successfully accomplish crisis management operations. Unfortunately, the US was reluctant to get involved militarily, particularly with ground forces. The use of air strikes, on the other side, would have endangered those European forces that were already deployed in Bosnia as elements of UNPROFOR or the British-Dutch-French Rapid Reaction Force.<sup>391</sup> As a result of missing consensus within NATO, war and the tragedy of ethnical cleansing in Bosnia and Herzegovina were not stopped until the Dayton peace accord was signed in 1995. Before Dayton, NATO, already confronted with legitimization problems, was stuck in a crisis due to its inactivity, while the US looked weak<sup>392</sup>. This crisis was solved successfully when the Clinton administration, with sufficient support from the US congress, the American people, and the military commanders, decided to get involved diplomatically and militarily. One of the major reasons for the US administration to get involved militarily was that the existence of NATO was set in danger. With the successful conduct of the SFOR mission, NATO regained the credibility it had lost before<sup>393</sup>, and emerged in a strengthened form out of this crisis.

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<sup>390</sup> Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance*, p. 90. Thomas points out that with the outlook of improved East-West relations, relations within NATO became restrained (p. 108).

<sup>391</sup> More detailed information and other examples of the divergent European and US interests are analyzed in Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*, pp. 5-45.

<sup>392</sup> Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*, p. 101.

<sup>393</sup> Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*, p. 164.

Several years later, in 1998, a similar scenario occurred in Kosovo. Again, the US administration was reluctant to get involved. From the US point of view, no vital national interests were threatened that justified the deployment of ground forces and any military action that might cause casualties.<sup>394</sup> Consequently, support of the Congress and the US people was unlikely. In 1999, when the US administration finally decided to take diplomatic and military action through NATO, the political restraints of the Kosovo war and its way of warfare nearly led to a defeat of NATO. Analyzing the Kosovo war, the European nations, in particular Britain and France, realized that a strategy of preventive military action that includes early deployment of military forces for crisis management is unlikely with a US that is more focused on national interests. In the end, rather the reluctance of the US to become too involved in peace-keeping and peace-making operations than the technology gap between the US and its European allies led to the St. Malo declaration of Britain and France that triggered the creation of autonomous Rapid Reaction Forces of the EU.

In its history, NATO was able to solve most of the crises that were initiated by governments of single member states. The governments' NATO policies are based on national interests and influenced by the people they represent, by the political parties they depend on, and by the academic discussion influencing the political opinions of politicians and people. In the end, as Thomas puts it, "The nature of the enemy (the SU; U.H.) was involved as a pretext for unity and conformity, but this did not change the fact that Europeans and Americans had different interests in important issues, ranging

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<sup>394</sup> Daalder/O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, pp. 97, 130-136.

from intervention in Vietnam to the formulation of nuclear strategy.”<sup>395</sup> Crises strengthened NATO as long as NATO was able to agree on new institutional arrangements, or at least on rhetoric that reconciled different national positions superficially. However, the defection of France constituted a European independence from the US that, after the experience in the Balkans, has found an institutional expression outside NATO: that is the EU establishing military forces of its own. By this, the European policy of decreasing independence from the US that started in the fields of nuclear weapons and gained its first major success with the dual track approach of the NATO strategic concept MC 14/3 was also applied in the field of peace support operations.

#### ***b. Reduction of Complexity and Uncertainty through Trust and Leadership***

The major social function of trust is the reduction of complexity.<sup>396</sup> Nation states have to create trust among their people, especially when confronted with a powerful opponent or with uncertainties about future threats. The necessity of trust applies also for alliances, specifically in order to ease cooperation among the member states, and between NATO commanders and national leaders. In NATO, rhetoric means have been used for this purpose.<sup>397</sup> In the end, rhetoric has even proven to be helpful in

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<sup>395</sup> Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance*, p. 84.

<sup>396</sup> Luhmann, Niklas, *Trust and Power*, Chichester/New York/Brisbane/Toronto, 1979, pp. 24-31.

<sup>397</sup> Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance*, elaborates the function of rhetoric for the NATO alliance. An excellent example is the rhetoric of common values to transform NATO into an agent of change in order to counter the Gorbachev challenge (pp. 146-147).



finding common solutions for new challenges. However, trust needs to stand tests in the reality of political action.

NATO SACEUR General Norstad serves as an excellent example to illustrate the importance of personalities creating and enhancing trust in alliances – expressed by the people and, in particular, by the political leaders of the member states.<sup>398</sup> First of all, and nearly independent from his personal attitudes, Norstad, being an Air Force general, embodied the technological way of war most people were convinced of and attracted by. Besides this, Norstad and his military records<sup>399</sup> represented the viability of the current NATO strategic concept of massive retaliation. Norstad himself supported his positive public image by offensive media activities.<sup>400</sup> As long as the NATO strategy of massive retaliation remained valid, Norstad was the right person to be SACEUR. With the Kennedy administration and the shift to the strategy of flexible response, Norstad's time as SACEUR was over – not only in order to ease the cooperation with the new US administration but also as a sign sent to the allies that the alteration of NATO's strategic concept was its strong determination.

Practicing a multi-dimensional approach, Norstad succeeded in establishing trustful relations with the governments of the European NATO member states. He clearly recognized that “alliance leadership demands a very deep understanding of the constituent governments, their policies, their basic motivation, and their political

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<sup>398</sup> For this reason, general Eisenhower became SACEUR in 1951 when the threat of war was perceived as extremely high because of the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950. See Jordan, *Norstad*, p. 80.

<sup>399</sup> Jordan, *Norstad*, pp. 21-95.

<sup>400</sup> Examples of Norstad's media coverage are in Jordan, *Norstad*, pp. 78-79.

strength.”<sup>401</sup> However, sometimes the results of his personal ability to create trustful relations were destroyed by institutional restraints. Possessing a double-hatted position, Norstad was not only NATO commander but also subject to the US government. Norstad realized that this national dependence created a dilemma for him (as well as for all multinational commanders of NATO): “Most of the problem came from the fact that too often they expected me to be the one who would carry out an American decision independently of the NATO countries”.<sup>402</sup> With the US administration forcing him only to reflect but not to advocate the positions of the European allies, Norstad finally was not always able to prove trustworthy when it was necessary to prevent NATO crises.<sup>403</sup>

However, NATO finally succeeded in establishing the position of Secretary-General as the one that is even more important for the establishment of trust between the member states. Being a politician, the Secretary-General can act more independently from the national chain of command than a military officer with a “double hat”. Furthermore, the Secretary-General is tasked to work for the North Atlantic Council (NAC) as the political decision-making body of NATO offering all member states equal representation. Consequently, the Secretary General possesses the opportunity to initiate political discussions that are based more on arguing and multinational responsibilities than on national interests.

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<sup>401</sup> O’Neil, Robert, “Foreword”, in Jordan, *Norstad*, p. XIII.

<sup>402</sup> General Norstad, as quoted in Jordan, *Norstad*, p. 9. See also p. 4.

<sup>403</sup> One famous example is the discussion between de Gaulle and Norstad about the deployment of NATO forces in France that was recounted as follows: “Norstad agreed, and made an extremely brilliant exposition, with his interallied staff in attendance. After congratulating him, the head of the French government asked the American general for a precise account of the deployment of nuclear weapons in France and of the targets assigned to them. Norstad: ‘Sir, I can answer only if we are alone.’ ‘So it be’, said de Gaulle. The two staffs withdrew. ‘So then?’ ‘Then, sir, I cannot reply to your questions, to my very great regret...’ And de Gaulle in conclusion: General, that is the last time, and

In situations where all others are not strong enough to take the burden and the political risks, leadership by the strongest ally is demanded. However, even the US as the strongest power within NATO has to consider national restraints in its foreign and security policies, imposed not only by the economy but also by the constitution<sup>404</sup>, the congress<sup>405</sup>, the people, the media, and the academics. By contrast, Britain and France appear to face less national constraints: the British prime minister and the French president have stronger positions within the governments than the US president; furthermore, the British and the French people are more willing to act militarily and to suffer casualties, also in peace support operations. In the end, assuming that tendencies of virtual war<sup>406</sup> do not create a new paradigm of real war, the appearance of the US forces as post-heroic forces<sup>407</sup> puts doubts on the leadership role of the US.

To sum up, NATO crises have had these leading elements in common:

- national interests and domestic politics forced member states to pursue different objectives within NATO;
- rhetoric did not always succeed in reconciling different positions;

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make yourself understand it, that a responsible French leader will allow such an answer to be made” (in Jordan, *Norstad*, p. 122).

<sup>404</sup> Because of constitutional reasons, the US could not, for example, support the European positions that Kosovo should stay within Serbia.

<sup>405</sup> Ignatieff, Michael, *Virtual War. Kosovo and Beyond*, New York: Metroolitan Books, 2000, p. 180.

<sup>406</sup> Ignatieff, *Virtual War*, pp. 161-215.

<sup>407</sup> Luttwak, Edward N., “Toward Post-Heroic Warfare”, in *Strategy and Force Planning*, ed. by Strategy and Force Planning Faculty, Naval War College, Newport, pp. 419-429. As long as military objectives can be reached by post-heroic behavior, this is not supposed to be a matter of concern. However, collateral damages seem to be increased by this kind of warfare. See also Daalder/O’Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, pp. 120-124. Ignatieff, *Virtual War*, pp. 186-187.

- mutual trust sometimes decreased in crises due to institutional restraints of the military commanders;
- leadership could not permanently be practiced due to domestic restraints of the US.

### **C. CONCLUSION**

With the British-French leadership in the CSDP, a paradigmatic shift in European strategy-making has occurred. Seen through the lense of Clausewitz's theory, the most important reasons for this paradigmatic shift are changes in the European balance-of-power that provided Germany with more relative advantages than France or Britain, and the mismatch between strategic goals and military means in the latter states' strategic concepts.

With British and French leadership, the EU military forces will conduct military strategies for Non-Article 5 operations that contain early deployment<sup>408</sup> of rapid reaction forces<sup>409</sup> in joint operations. In contrast to NATO, the EU will put significantly more emphasis on the implementation of a broad security concept, combining military and civilian means very closely, also on the strategic level. This strategy runs in all the problems that Clausewitz connects with the offensive. The point of culmination is of utmost importance due to the limited amount of EU troops and assets. This implies the establishment of a special relationship with NATO as the more powerful European

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<sup>408</sup> In the Bosnia and Kosovo conflict, Britain and France made decisions to deploy forces significantly earlier than all the other European states and the US.

security institution. Thereby, the EU faces a strategic dilemma: on the one side, a successful EU will undermine the relevance of NATO as European security institution; on the other side, the EU definitely needs NATO even in the long term as a reassurance for escalation scenarios.

Clausewitz's proposition of war as a continuation of policies and politics points out several areas of concern that are exemplified by NATO experience. EU member states may be dissatisfied with the political-military action of Britain and France as the military leader of the EU. In the EU, leadership must be compatible with the consensus principle in decision-making, sufficient participation of all member states, and the heroic behavior expectations even in those scenarios where British and French national interests are not that dominant.<sup>410</sup> Furthermore, the EU military commander's ability to create and maintain trust will be facilitated if established as a supra-governmental institution.

On the military level of strategy, important questions need to be answered in the concrete strategy-making processes. One main question is how far multinationality should go in the conduct of military operations. In line with Clausewitz, there is no general rule for determining up to what level multinationality is possible and effective in crisis operations. This has to be assessed on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the specific conditions under which a given crisis operation is carried out. This includes not only the area of operations with the opponent forces (and neutral states) but also the domestic situation of the member states that might differ from scenario to scenario.

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<sup>409</sup> To a certain degree, this compensates the Europeans deficiencies in high technology warfare that is most suitable in reacting to unacceptable actions opponents have already done.

<sup>410</sup> The neo-liberal and constructivist approach to multinational cooperation and EU strategy-making may help to prevent crises or to overcome them more rapidly. However, as the analysis shows, the strategic environment of the EU is definitely based on the traditional power-of-balance approach.

Evidently, multinationality must not weaken military effectiveness but rather strengthen it.<sup>411</sup> In fact, armed forces deployed in peace support operations must possess the capability to fight battles. Nevertheless, as Clausewitz argues, combat power comprises not only the physical forces but also the strength of the political and military will to get engaged.<sup>412</sup> And the will to get engaged is influenced by the legitimacy of military engagements that are likely to increase with the level of multinationality. Consequently, scenarios are imaginable in which a high level of multinationality is implemented although it decreases military effectiveness. Furthermore, multinationality has a favorable long-term perspective. Combined training, education, and conduct of operations are likely to increase the military efficiency significantly. However, in the foreseeable future, the degree of multinationality must respect Clausewitz's emphasis on the battle as the single means in war. If a crisis situation is likely to escalate to war, multinationality can only be conducted in inverse proportion to the intensity of the conflict. If combat power is necessary, multinationality will be less. If legitimacy is required and the situation is more permissive, multinationality will increase.

The diversity of equipment in many European military forces definitely limits their interoperability. However, in peace support operations that are characterized by an uncertain and complex security environment, the strategic and operational headquarters of the EU can take advantage of choosing from a wide range of military assets and doctrines. On the other side, this simultaneously increases the complexity of strategic decisions and requires a high standard of education of the civilian and military personnel.

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<sup>411</sup> Rasmussen, Ingrid, NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Committee Reports: Defense and security. Draft special report: *Multinationality in crisis response operations*, 22.09.2000 ([www.nato-pa.int/publications/comrep/2000/at-244-e.html](http://www.nato-pa.int/publications/comrep/2000/at-244-e.html)2000, 10).

<sup>412</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 77.

Evidently, the degree of multinationality in a specific military operation requires a strategic decision on the political level of the EU. Politicians must make decisions quite early in order to gain time for the force generation process to be conducted on the strategic military level. Consequently, the proactive and offensive strategy of the EU puts the strategy-making processes on the political and military levels under the strictest time pressure. Recognizing Clausewitz's insights in the "fascinating trinity", the EU strategists on the political and military levels finally have to put specific emphasis on policies, people, and time as major strategic dimensions. As the experience of NATO shows, crises are likely to emerge in this strategic triangle.

If crises occur, political and military leaders should try to take advantage of them. In order to emerge in a more strengthened shape from a crisis, institutional procedures can be changed<sup>413</sup>, new strategic concepts developed, or reconciling rhetoric used.<sup>414</sup> Furthermore, trust established and maintained by the political and military leaders of the EU may help to prevent crises or to overcome them more rapidly. However, as the crises of NATO displayed, the EU must be aware of the negative impacts of rhetoric on strategy-making: rhetoric in strategy-making might cause the mismatching of end and

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<sup>413</sup> This happened even during the Kosovo war when the alliance's members agreed on a procedure to select targets that allowed quick decision-making without denying the nation's right to veto. See Daalder/O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, p. 123: „... the allies officially delegated their role in scrubbing target sets to Secretary-General Solana, who in turn allowed informal input from countries with particular interests and concerns in the targeting process, most notably the United States, Britain, and France.“

<sup>414</sup> The successful management of a crisis definitely depends also on the enemy's action. As Daalder and O'Hanlon argue, „Perversely, Milosevic came to NATO's rescue. In a way that alliance leaders did not anticipate, he shored up their resolve and cohesion by his brutal treatment of the ethnic Albanians“ (Daalder/O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, p. 19).

means. In NATO, this started with the forward defense in the 50's and found its most recent expression in the concrete fighting of war in Kosovo<sup>415</sup>.

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<sup>415</sup> See the alliance's goals as formulated by president Clinton in Daalder/O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly*, pp. 101-102. In general, the powerful rhetoric of human rights provides political objectives the public is expected to support while the willingness of governments, people and commanders to actually fight wars is decreasing. This might lead to a gap between high political objectives and limited willingness to use military means.



## V. FINAL REMARKS

As a final chapter, some of the thesis' conclusions are highlighted. First of all: Clausewitz's theory of war and strategy has the potential to establish the desirable European strategic paradigm. His writings may well provide the common theoretical framework in developing the strategic concept of the EU and its military strategies for specific scenarios. The superiority of Clausewitz's theory results from its comprehensiveness that is founded on exceptional personal experience and mind, broad historical evidence, and deep theoretical reflections including philosophy of science. Therefore, Clausewitz integrates the alternative concepts of his critics and competitors in a scientific approach that is more likely to meet the complexity of war. By this, he does not offer absolute prescriptive principles to direct politicians, officials, and commanders in their strategy-making. By contrast, the Prussian philosopher of war "only" provides intellectual tools that facilitate the analysis of war in general and specific military situations with regard to their dynamic strategic multidimensionality. With these, he prevents the military from establishing autonomous or elite strategic concepts that are justified by "timeless" military principles; instead, he makes war and strategy subject to the rational discourse of all social players involved, thus covering all dimensions of strategy-making.

However, in order to take advantage of the fruitfulness of Clausewitz's scientific approach and his propositions on war and strategy, politicians, officials, and commanders must understand his theoretical writings properly. Strategy-makers, particularly, should prevent any selective readings of Clausewitz's *On War*. By contrast, strategy-makers are

encouraged to critically reflect upon their own strategic thinking by confronting it with Clausewitz's *entire* theory of war and strategy. To practice this critical method, two prerequisites are necessary: first, the proper education of strategists that includes the ability to critically reflect upon one's own strategic mind, and cooperation in the strategy-making process that includes scholars with expertise in the theory and history of strategy-making.

With the European integration process, most reasons for differences between the British and the continental way of warfare and strategy have been abolished. Certainly, Britain has conducted the most radical shift in strategy-making. Implementing the indirect approach, Britain used to rely on time as an important strategic dimension of war. Naval supremacy and superior economic resources allowed Britain to wait for favorable military conditions. Today, by contrast, Britain has committed itself to a EU strategy that is focused on early deployment and long-lasting engagements of military forces. However, the British approach of indirectness finds a strong European expression in the broad security concept of the EU that comprises a wide spectrum of civilian means and coordinates them closely with the conduct of military operations at the strategic level. Furthermore, the EU benefits from the strong British political culture of political supremacy and inter-agency cooperation in strategy-making. Undoubtedly, the British approach is in line with the conclusions Clausewitz draws in his theoretical writings. Paradoxically, if the additional British tradition of trashing Clausewitz can be overcome, Britain has the capacity to prevent its EU partners from continuing to understand Clausewitz in the one-dimensional continental way that traditionally focuses more at the operational and tactical level of warfare.

Strategically, the EU is both, a continental and a naval power. Tactically, the ERRF are designed as a corps-sized military formation enabled to conduct joint operations. However, because of the limited number of forces assigned to the EU, the capabilities for power projection are rather limited. Even if the EU military force strength is likely to be increased in the future, its military operations will depend on NATO for the foreseeable future. This is not so much because of the lack of planning capabilities or the technology gap but rather because of the necessity to be prepared for escalation scenarios. Consequently, EU strategy-makers need to establish strong institutional and personal links to NATO, thereby facing the dilemma of a successful EU undermining the relevance of NATO in the field of crisis management operations.

Implementing the EU strategy-making as an inter-governmental and not supra-governmental process, EU strategy-makers encounter enormous complexity. Like NATO, the EU will, most probably, face crises. The successful management of internal crises depends primarily on the leadership behavior of Britain and France; on the ability of the commander of the ERRF to create trust among the force contributing countries; and on the European identity of the people of the European states, including the soldiers. Nevertheless, the strong dependence on national policies and politics as well as the inexperienced co-leadership of Britain and France put a burden on the capability of the EU to implement its pro-active power projection strategy.

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